PARTISAN REVIEW

SPRING, 1956

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Humanism in Thomas Mann

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Original Sin, Natural Law, and Politics

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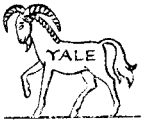

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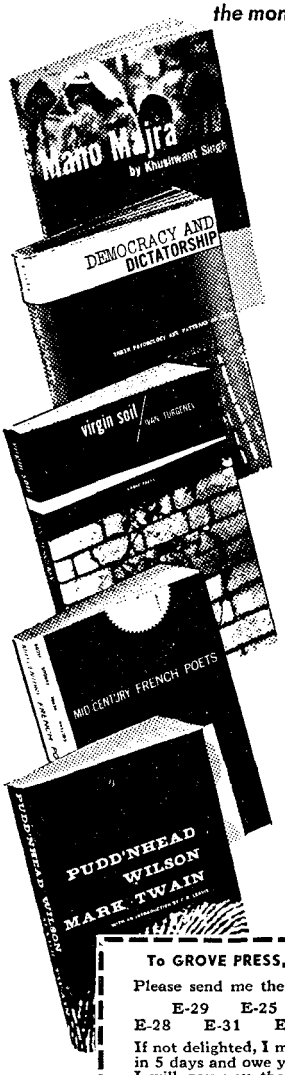

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Marguerite Yourcenar

HUMANISM IN THOMAS MANN*

The works of Thomas Mann surely belong to that very rare category of the modern classic, which is not to say that they have passed beyond all discussion; they are, on the contrary, to be taken up again and again, reconsidered, and examined in all their aspects and at their various levels, serving both to nourish the mind and to test its qualities. Such works appeal to us at a fifth reading for reasons different from, or even opposite to, those which made us like them in the beginning. The atmosphere which at first seems strange and almost exotic to the non-German reader of *Buddenbrooks* wears off as he grows familiar with the book, or more intimately acquainted with Germany itself; the human document then lies fully exposed, the drama of a man caught up in those familial and social forces which have formed him, and which are slowly moving to destroy him. What was new and contemporary in a novel like *The Magic Mountain,* expressly built as it is to describe a single time and place, does not conceal the truly a-temporal and cosmic basis of that masterpiece; the sensual element which once proved disquieting in *Death in Venice* no longer surprises the present-day reader, who is thus left free to meditate upon one of the finest allegories of death that the somber spirit of Germany has ever produced.

German works these, without question: German in their use of hallucination to illuminate fact; in their search for wisdom magically acquired, wherein secrets whispered or half-spoken hover between the lines, apparently intended to be revealed as little as possible; in their portrayal of those great entities which haunt Germanic

* A revised and greatly expanded version of an essay which appeared originally in French in the volume, *Hommage de la France à Thomas Mann,* published last year in Paris by Martin Flinker.

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thought, the Earth-Spirit, the Mothers, the Devil, and Death, a death more active and more virulent than elsewhere, mysteriously mingled with life itself, and sometimes endued with attributes of love. And last, these works are German in their strong symphonic structure, in the contrapuntal character of their parts as developed throughout more than half a century. But this Germanic substance has been permeated, like the country itself, with leaven from other lands: the heroes of *Death in Venice* and *The Magic Mountain* each owe their supreme revelation to the Greek Mysteries; Jewish thought, Talmudic even more than Biblical, impregnates the learned circumvolutions of the *Joseph* tetralogy, and that in a time when the German government was decreeing destruction to the Jewish race; Hindu philosophy, with which German thinking often claims affinity, provides the transcendental eroticism of *Transposed Heads*; fatidic Asia speaks, in *The Magic Mountain,* through the stammering lips of Mynheer Peeperkorn. And furthermore, for the typical German represented by Frau von Tümmler the idealized lover is an Anglo-Saxon, while for both Hans Castorp and Gustave Aschenbach the beloved wears Slavic guise.

Such diverse materials as these are worked into a solid mass more suggestive of some slow geological stratification than of exact, fully planned architectural construction. Mann's meticulous realism, that obsession with realistic detail which so often characterizes German vision, serves as mother-solution for his crystalline structures of allegory; it serves also as bed for the nearly subterranean stream of myth and of dream. *Death in Venice,* opening with the realistic account of a stroll in the outskirts of Munich, and sparing us thereafter no detail of timetables for boats and trains, of hotel furniture, or of bold color in a tie, goes on to fashion the mishaps and vexations of a journey into an allegoric Dance of Death; far below the surface, burning but inexhaustible, secret issue of some more ancient symbolism, flows the profound reverie of a man in prey of his own ending, drawing from his very substance his death and his love. *The Magic Mountain* is a highly accurate description of a sanatorium in German Switzerland about the year 1912; it is also a medieval *summa,* an allegory of the City of the World; and last, it is a mythological epic of a Ulysses of the inner depths, captive of ogres and of larvae, but approaching wisdom within himself as his own modest Ithaca. *The Black Swan* portrays a German matron of the mid-

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1920s in her full, slightly ridiculous particularities, but this woman is Germany in allegory; at a level of meaning deeper still, her stricken body is the cave where Cancer battles Desire and the two, like crabs, devour each other. Possibly Peeperkorn is Gerhart Hauptmann, but at the same time he is some god Pan strangely carved in a crag of the Engadine; he is, above all, a personification of life, massive and powerful as life itself, and mythically related to the waterfall against which the author silhouettes him on the eve of his death. Are Naphta and Settembrini authentic portraits, hardly caricatural, of originals whose every aspect is noted, their attire, state of health, means of livelihood, their mental twists and peculiar habits of speech? Rather, do they not exist merely to signify what is empty and arrogant in most of our philosophical discussions; have we climbed those glacial heights only to pursue with them *ad absurdum* an endless sophomoric debate? Or do they, on the contrary, embody two governing principles in the world; are they gigantic megaphones through which is voiced, with the clumsiness of mere words, a problem grotesquely stated because far too vast for words? Reality, allegory, and myth merge into one whole; by some sort of constant circulation all these characters continually return to that center of life from which they are born.

The same complexity obtains in Mann where time is concerned, and its corollary, place. Time infinitely varied, since his works are immersed in great part in an historic or legendary past, whether remote or near, and since, just because they have been fashioned in the course of a long life, the contemporary parts of his narratives have been caught up in the passage of time, and have slipped from the present to the past. The Germany pictured in *Buddenbrooks* or *Death in Venice* differs as much from the Germany reflected scarcely thirty years later in *The Blood of the Walsungs, Doctor Faustus,* and *The Black Swan* as from the Goethean setting of *The Beloved Returns.* Furthermore, by some mysterious change, the immediate in Mann enters promptly into the category of the historical; for this contemplator of time in motion the present has no privileged place in the sequence of centuries; all periods, including this in which we exist, are drifting alike within time itself. Occasionally these novels, though set in the past, have encroached upon the future, as when at the end of *The Magic Mountain* Joachim's ghost appears wearing a helmet from a war which has not yet taken place; the discomfiture

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of the Buddenbrooks family is more complete today than in the years when it was described; the existence of an inquisitorial mysticism such as Naphta's in *The Magic Mountain* has been grimly authenticated by the subsequent course of actual historical events.

Gradually Mann's spatial and temporal conceptions have been enlarged, if not changed, by his progression throughout half a century from realism in the literal sense of the term to realism in its full philosophic implications. The drama of *Buddenbrooks* was still set against a background of urban life, and moved with the town clocks of Lübeck. In *The Magic Mountain,* however, Hans Castorp's evocation of waves and sand along a distant Baltic shore suggests the beat and timeless particles of pure duration. The feverish tempo of the sanatorium, so exactly situated in an hour of universal history, before the outbreak of the War of 1914, is gauged on the scale of geological time, like that of the mountain itself. The *Joseph* novels have their own, Biblical time, running like a mere trickle in the immensity of the Mesopotamian plain immemorially inhabited by man. In *Doctor Faustus,* daemonic time, extended to infinity and obtained at the price of the hero's life, is inscribed within the limits of the last years of pre-Hitlerian Germany, but bears no relation to the visible passage of day and night. Thus, more and more explicitly are moments in history assimilated into a cosmic conception of eternity.

"I adore you, phantom of water and albumin, destined for dissection in the tomb." Such are the words of Hans Castorp to Clavdia Chauchat in the course of the strangest of avowals of love. Mann is only formulating here, in terms of organic chemistry, views akin to those of humanist occultists of the Renaissance: man the microcosm, formed of the same substance and governed by the same laws as the cosmos, subject like matter itself to a series of partial or total transmutations, and connected with everything else by some highly developed capillary system. Such basically cosmic humanism has nothing to do with Platonic and Christian antinomy of soul and body, of the world of the mind and the world of the senses, of God and matter. It admits, therefore, neither of the process of mystic conversion which marks the more recent writings of Aldous Huxley, nor of that asceticism born of aesthetic standards which raises Proust from contemplation of a world of imperfect and transitory reality to the vision of a world which is flawless and pure. Nor does it allow for that identification of the physiological with the repulsive which

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is so typical of Sartre, for whom the Christian concept of the indignity of the flesh persists in a context otherwise shorn of Christian ideals. But the simple and reassuring notions of felicity, sanity, and moral equilibrium, so important for the old, traditional humanism, are likewise rejected, or rather, transformed by this humanism which knows also the abyss. Desire, sickness, death, and evil, and, by a bold paradox, thought itself, slowly corroding its bodily support, all are ferments and solvents in a process of alchemical transmutation; they bring the "phantom of water and albumin," whether willing or no, again into contact with its original sphere, which is nothing less than the universe itself.

Mann's attitude in the presence of conclusions to which his own premises have led him (conclusions frequently subversive) is not without suggestion of the cautious deliberation of his hero Hans Castorp. His characters differ from those of most of the great novelists of our day in that they do not at first sight appear to be solitary and desocialized, cut off from ideological bases, or even questioning that such bases exist; nor are they launched in the absurd, or comfortably installed in some imaginary world. Instead, his heroes are first presented as inseparable from a class or a group, supported but also bound fast by social customs which they believe to be good, and which have been so, perhaps, but which are now no more than sclerotic remains of a life gone by; their initial state is much less one of despair than of a certain blind complacency. Only belatedly, and in fumbling fashion, will each one in turn try to penetrate beneath that petrified crust, seeking to regain the world of vital energy to which he belongs, but which he can no longer enter except by sacrificing his external man in actual or symbolic death. Indeed, Mann seems never to have eliminated wholly from his consciousness, and still less from his unconscious mind, some remnant of puritanical reprobation or bourgeois timidity in face of that adventure in self-discovery; in a period when the prevalent literary themes inclined more and more toward facile self-liberation he steadily warned of the gruesome perils which lie in wait for him who would go beyond familiar and lawful bounds. To the very last this rupture of the artist with his bourgeois environment, though the subject is almost conventional, continues to be for Mann the symbol of a terrifying choice; early in his work this drama becomes charged with metaphysical implica-

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tions, and is gradually made to loom as large as human destiny in all its forms. His caution, his daring, his slow-paced irony, and the winding detours characteristic of his very thinking are in direct relation to the dangers of what is for him still the most shocking of all endeavors.

In the dull atmosphere of *Buddenbrooks,* or against the sultry background of *Death in Venice,* characters weary of virtue are still desperately resisting the solicitations of chaos: Thomas Buddenbrook, drearily confined within his middle-class pattern of propriety, dies in the service of a correct but outworn social order; the austere Gustave Aschenbach defends his joyless respectability to the end against love's insidious infection. In the shorter stories written before the year 1914, and set in provincial Germany, there is the same mixture of apathy and despair: life seems to rot there under its cover of rigor and decorum; the sole means of issue open upon dream, burning passion, or departure to another land, and lead without fail to death. These heroes of Mann's youth are victims of chaos; they are not yet its explorers, and only unconsciously are they accomplices. The daemonic force of Aschenbach's love, the erotic phantasy of Albrecht van der Qualen in *The Wardrobe,* little Herr Friedmann's howl of repressed desire—these are given free vent only when the tormented one has reached the extreme brink of dissolution, or the total irresponsibility of dream. The author's severity toward those of his characters who are men of letters, fugitives from bourgeois society, is in part a precautionary device and in part a phenomenon of self-punishment. In *Tonio Kröger,* which strikes the note of sentimental comedy in that series of otherwise tragic conflicts, the hero (through whom Mann doubtless speaks) pleads in favor of compromise between the anarchy of the artist, which he feels within him, and the ideal bourgeois life, which continues to be for him, somewhat naïvely, a symbol both of moral rectitude and of bodily ease, of spiritual and of physical comfort; paradoxically, it is order, or what may be called by that name, and not disorder, which tempts Tonio Kröger.

In *The Magic Mountain* belief in daemonism triumphs for the first time over Schopenhauerian pessimism and Stoic conformity; the officer Joachim, martyr to rigidity and refusal, yields first place to his cousin Hans Castorp, whose typically bourgeois virtues are at

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work in sounding new and strange depths. Here, upon the snow, myth dawns, openly: that element of the fantastic which is diffused through some of the early stories is channeled now in accordance with laws of primitive, magic epic and of rituals of initiation. At the same time Mann attains to what may be called a classic phase in his romanticism, recognizable from the fact that this work, like all classic achievement, closes with some slight gain in the realm of human understanding; the novel of the triumph of death has become a novel of education in the vein of *Wilhelm Meister*: Hans Castorp has *learned* to live. That somewhat inept, almost comical young bourgeois, whom the author dispatches into the battle smoke of the War of 1914 without wishing, or perhaps being able, to tell whether or not he will come out alive, exemplifies a species more and more threatened with extinction, *Homo Sapiens*. Such an eternal student is the antithesis of the Sorcerer's Apprentice: for him the study of science, which is too often blamed for dehumanizing, leads only to a more accurate conception of the possibilities and limitations of man's estate, and does so by a method which has ever been that of the true humanist; experimentation with those doubtful sciences, half true, half false, which are called the occult sciences, are no more than a valiant exploration carried on to the farthest point of human knowledge. Hermetic wisdom has become for him wisdom pure and simple.

The tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers,* set on the borderland between history and myth, is one of those great humanistic interpretations of the past made possible of accomplishment only because of the slow and little-advertised work of generations of scholars, in this case notably ethnographers, historians of ancient religions, and archaeologists of the last half-century. For the first time a literary work which is intended neither as a defense of the Jewish point of view nor as Christian exegesis shows us both what unites the Jewish race with, and separates it from, the vast world of pagan religion and myth, and makes us witness that monstrous birth, as it were, of the monotheistic conception of God. If of all Mann's great books the *Joseph* novels alone have the erotic interest concentrated almost exclusively upon conjugal love, or rather, upon the procreative forms of sensuality, it is because the entire series is in a way the story of a symbolic pregnancy: Jacob-called-Israel gives birth to God much

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as Rachel brings forth the true Son. The great merit of Mann's descent into these dim recesses of human recollection is that he brings again to light that primitive consciousness which has become for us our unconscious process. The characters in this version of the Biblical story telescope within themselves whole generations, and live through experiences and emotions of their ancestors as if those adventures were their own; thus they are less individuals than more sacred entities, personages of a mythical drama. Authors and actors each of his own play, they stop short of tragedy whether because of their comedy of errors, cheating games and verbal equivocation, or because their world is ruled by two conceptions (themselves apparently opposed), the omnipresence of the present and the eternal recurrence of events; such characters are still, and quite naturally, all of a piece with the universe. Both Ishmael and Esau are alike the Red Spirit, the Simoon, and Set the Murderer; Abraham is both grandfather to Jacob and his immemorial ancestor, the Moon Wanderer who has set forth to find God beyond the city of Ur (that symbolic archetype of all cities), a kind of Wandering Jew forever walking anew the road of time's beginning. Joseph himself is, on the one hand, Tammuz-Adonis, the Torn and Resurrected; on the other, he is that character particularly dear to Mann, more pliant than heroic, the darling of fate, the artist, the delicate, charming heir of an ancient race, a less sickly brother to Hanno Buddenbrook, a Tonio Kröger with more assurance, or a less slow-minded Hans Castorp. With him the epic of Jacob's search for God is resolved almost too readily into a *modus vivendi* with God. A metaphysical work, this, under its aspect of chronicle replete with human substance: tragic elements disappear in the monotonous majesty of these some thousand pages extending like desert sand, in the star-strewn night of myth, the irony of mirage, the endlessly modulated lines of dunes and of patterns in Oriental carpet.

Literary play, as distinct from phantasy or irony, is long in coming to the fore in Mann as an essential means of expression. Among his humorous writings the early novel *Royal Highness* is no more than a slight comedy for court theater; *Disorder and Early Sorrow* is a mere occasional piece; the picaresque "autobiography" *Felix Krull*, conceived on the scale of Mann's great books and apparently intended to take a place in his work comparable to that of *Lafcadio's Adventures* in the work of Gide, was not destined for com-

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pletion until the very end of his life. Only from the time of the mythological comedy of *Joseph and His Brothers* does there enter increasingly into his novels an element of reassurance, and what might almost be called banter, the kind of involuntary scherzo which frequently predominates in any great writer who has reached his later maturity. In that medieval ballad, *The Holy Sinner,* Mann's more secret themes appear, thinly disguised in Gothic forms, in the freedom afforded by masquerade; the absurd dangers of the human adventure are surmounted now with the sly facility of the dreamer-who-knows-that-he-dreams: forbidden love between brother and sister, and then between mother and son, bears sanctified fruit; the author's use of Old French turns the lovers' talk, in their incestuous bed, into a scholarly diversion. The libertine tale, *The Transposed Heads,* treats the Oriental, and Hegelian, motif of perpetual change in the lightest of tones. *The Black Swan* resumes the sensuous themes of *Death in Venice* after an interval of forty years, but transposes them into a domestic key: a highly susceptible matron is the leading character here, instead of a man won over in spite of himself; intimate household scenes make a setting of bourgeois comfort for the horrors of that Dance of Death. These later novels occupy a position in Mann's writings somewhat similar to that of *The Winter's Tale* or *Cymbeline* in the work of Shakespeare. Pessimism and optimism alike have been left behind; the world of fixed forms, and of moving forms, too, order and disorder, life-in-death and death-in-life, these have become different aspects of one MYSTERIUM MAGNUM now grown thoroughly familiar to this wise old alchemist. A sense of play is gradually taking the place of the sense of danger.

With *Doctor Faustus* this scherzo turns strident, with desperate undertones, like the music of irony and terror in the *Apocalypse* of Adrian Leverkühn, musician and principal character of that alarming book. Jest and danger are coupled here, like two monsters face to face on a cathedral door. Never has Mann gone farther in art and strategy than in this novel, where in a fugue-like movement three themes, political, theological, and ethical, prepare for, and later prolong, the theme about music itself; in turn, the problem of music becomes one with the problem of the Understanding, of its limits and the price paid for crossing those bounds. The will to learn how to live, and the individual's accord with life's very rhythm, such impor-

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tant themes in *The Magic Mountain,* have sinisterly disappeared; instead, the hero of this work achieves his full stature by methods of self-destruction, or else by imprisonment within his own being. The initiate has become the damned. Going back beyond Goethe for interpretation of the pact, Mann immerses his utterly modern Faust in an atmosphere of the dying Middle Ages which is also an atmosphere of apocalypse, the end of the world. By a technique of apparent withdrawal characteristic of Mann's literary game Leverkühn's grim tragedy is reported in conventional and flatly academic terms by a narrator, Doctor Zeitblom, interposed between us and the hero, and it thus becomes about what the story of Faust would be if recounted by the scholar Wagner, or Hamlet's story if told by some Horatio crossed with old Polonius. The virtuous sentiments of Doctor Zeitblom form a kind of neutralizing agent between the accursed composer and the legitimate apprehension of the reader. So grave are the political and moral implications of this work, as set forth in Leverkühn's problem as an artist, that we understand why the author has resorted to prudent circumlocution: this novel of veiled meanings aims at nothing less than revealing the inevitable, and accordingly almost justifiable, collaboration of Satan in every human achievement, however horrifying the thought of such justification may be. The reader is the more uneasy in that this novel, mingling as it does incidents drawn from the lives of Nietzsche and Tchaikovsky, portraits *à clef,* and autobiographical suggestions (even using the mirror-like device of portraying its hero as treating in music subjects which Mann has treated in literature), seems to sound a fearsome echo to Tonio Kröger's lamentations, some half-century before, as to the dubious status of the artist and the sinister nature of the artistic process itself. One wonders, in the end, if the somber grandeur of this product of Mann's old age does not lie in his categorical return to the traditional opposition of good and evil, abandoning outright every humanist position; or whether, on the contrary, beneath the apparent, dramatic denunciation of the daemoniac a strangely subversive daemonism has not secretly won the day.

It would be easy to compile from Mann's writings a list of hermetic themes or incidents somewhat similar to the symbols of Goethe's *Fairy Tale* or of the Second Part of *Faust,* or to Masonic alle-

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gories in the story of *The Magic Flute,* showing the marked influence of ancient occult tradition upon his work. It would be less easy, however, to determine when the novelist has drawn deliberately upon a common store of magic symbolism and when, on the contrary, symbolic images or myth-type incidents are born spontaneously from the internal chemistry of his composition. Among themes relating to initiation may be counted the stress upon Hans Castorp's grotesque, uncontrollable laughter in the opening pages of *The Magic Mountain*, a first effect of a cure for all set habit; likewise, the description of an evening at the cinema, toward the middle of the same book, so close to Plato's image of the Cave of Shadows, a theme reinforced later on by accounts of necromantic séances in a basement office of the sanatorium; and again, the typical episode of "descent into the tomb" symbolized in *Joseph and His Brothers* by the pit and by the prison, in *The Magic Mountain* by the shrouding in the snow. Symbolic of initiation in *Doctor Faustus* is the vision of descent by diving bell among the creatures of the deep, a variant of the Hebraic vision of the abyss. Esoteric, too, is the particular significance attached to the traditional device of disguise in the *Joseph* narrative: Jacob-in-Esau, Leah-in-Rachel, brother-in-stranger; and still more esoteric is the conception of self-detachment, that almost sinister game of the man-who-knows-more-than-he-knows, played both by Joachim and the young dressmaker in *The Magic Mountain* as death draws near for each. Especially hermetic is the role assigned to physical suffering, which relates in these non-Christian works not to the idea of salvation, but to processes of awakening and renewal. In *Buddenbrooks* sickness is still primarily a refuge: there little Hanno escapes from the burden of existence. Later on, however, sickness becomes a means of approach to the Mysteries. The moist spot on Hans Castorp's lung, Leverkühn's syphilis, these symbolize entry into dangerous knowledge; they are parts of the initiatory themes of the toll-gate and the pact.

Intimately allied to the conception of change-sickness-death, and slyly pervasive in Mann, is the erotic element, treated by him as another aspect of the physiological which serves as channel to the universal; as such it relates to initiatory themes. The objects of love, Frau von Rinnlingen, Tadzio, Clavdia Chauchat, Esmeralda, and Ken, are little more than conductors of souls, divinities in Hermes'

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role; they retire once they have led the living, or the dying, to the brink of that inner abyss where mysteries of the senses, of life, and of death lie exposed. Even the most fully embodied of these loves are hardly more tangible than the bizarre entities in *The Wardrobe* and in *Doctor Faustus,* the naked story-teller and the little Mermaid, both of auto-erotic origin, perhaps. What Mann stresses in love is strange combinations: identity of sex, disparity of race, or of age, the conjunction of beauty and disease within the same body, the rarity of physical possession, if not its lack; all these are essential ingredients of a potion which transports to realms far from the habitual, the licit, the known. Quite without paradox we may include within the same category of magic the theme of incest as it occurs in *The Blood of the Walsungs* or *The Holy Sinner.* For incest shows the individual falling back upon himself and his family group, sealing in their isolation, as it were, but at the same time breaking violently with the mores of the group; it tends, for at least a part of mankind, to constitute both the supreme sexual crime and the supreme magic act, and is imbued, therefore, with both prestige and horror. Mann's daring approach to the subject is more in line with tradition than might at first appear; more than one Oriental and German legend portrays the hero, or the predestined one, as a son born of incest, as does *The Holy Sinner.*

Equally magic is the role allotted to music: in the post-Wagnerian world of *Buddenbrooks* or of *Tristan* music still works an evil spell; in *The Magic Mountain* it is frankly necromantic; it becomes daemoniac in the atonal universe of *Doctor Faustus,* where Arnold Schoenberg's experimentation is made the supreme symbol of destruction and renewal of forms. One might be tempted to see in this laying of emphasis upon music a wholly German trait, but the fact is that so typically French a writer as Proust attributes almost as much power to that art as does Mann. "More extraordinary than table-turning . . .": Proust, too, has felt that by some admirable black magic each virtuoso actually engaged in performing Vinteuil's *Sonata* was reverently summoning its composer back to life. Still, for the author of *Remembrance of Things Past* music is less a ritual incantation than an intimation of immortality. Swann does not seek to descend, as does Hans, into the realm of Death, hypnotically following the gyrations of gramophone disks for arias from popular

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opera. Music in Proust remains firmly established in the domain of aesthetic realization; only in seeking formal perfection does it rise beyond the sensory, and thence to that world of Platonic recollection toward which all Proust's work is directed. For Mann, on the contrary, music reopens the portals of night. It plunges the human creature once more into secret depths of the universe, into the heart of a telluric world both above and below man's sphere, like the Goethean world of the Mothers. The concept of immortality to which Proust attains through music counts less for Mann than the concept of eternity.

Reflections of a Non-Political Man: this title given by the novelist to a collection of essays published in 1918 is still, despite all appearances, wholly applicable to the rest of his work, to the last.[1] It would be idle to try to explain his novels by his successive reactions to the political tragedies of his day: he can even be said to have adopted the same semi-detached attitude toward the events of his century as Goethe and Erasmus each held with regard to their own times; if, like convex mirrors, his books reflect a condensed image of Germany over the past fifty years it is precisely because he has refused to mix techniques of journalism in with those of fiction. And yet Mann's initial pessimism was a normal reaction of German intelligence in presence of the gross optimism of the period, smugly materialistic and rigidly militaristic, and doomed to a bad end; the daemonism of his later writings has been confirmed by that release of elemental forces and deadly ideologies which have swept over Germany, and the world, for more than thirty years. His conception of illness, so essential in his work, has been imposed upon him in part by his study of these great ailing bodies. But when Mann does describe morbid symptoms in the body politic he sees them only as the most conspicuous and most external indications of an evil inherent, first of all, in Being itself. The feeling for biological fact, on the one hand, and the obsession with metaphysical problems, on the other, which together have protected him in his novels from mere

1 We are concerned here only with Mann as novelist, so this is not the place to discuss the content of those particular essays in which he undertook, like so many German writers of his time, to defend Germany's imperialist policy. The fact is recalled here only to show that in the interminable dialogue between Joachim and Hans Castorp the author was slow to break with Joachim's point of view.

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psychologizing, where so many of his contemporaries have been content to dwell, have likewise kept him from errors of purely political perspective. The political movements which so profoundly modified nineteenth-century Germany have only a muffled repercussion in *Buddenbrooks,* or are limited there to minor local incidents; the War of 1870 is but mentioned in passing, in the course of a conversation about the improved market for wheat. In *The Magic Mountain* the state of mind which led to the War of 1914, "acute irritability," as Mann dubs it, is conceived of as much like some barometric phenomenon announcing a cyclone, and is described in terms more cosmic than human. The satire on fascism in *Mario the Magician* is soon transformed into grim phantasy, where political allusions serve only as somewhat negligible ingredients in a Hoffmanesque portrayal of the grotesque and horrible. The massive *Joseph* series, though in composition over the period between 1930 and 1943, does not turn into an attack upon tyranny, or a plea for the Jewish race, as might have been expected from a writer more concerned with immediate actuality. In *Doctor Faustus* the summary of events of the fatal year 1944 forms a rumbling base to the posthumous account of the musician's life, and doubtless more or less reproduces Mann's own voice in his role of *praeceptor Germaniae* over the radio from America; but this commentary on the German catastrophe is merely secondary to the inner drama, to the tragedy of the man of genius bound over irrevocably to Evil. The current political scene is less accepted in Mann, or ignored, or even transcended, than made to take its place in a series of causes and effects more essential than the political present itself.

And certainly the ambiguous *Doctor Faustus* seems at first view something that can be reduced to a relatively simple allegory of the political condition of Germany between the years 1920 and 1945, since at the end of the book the central character is almost explicitly identified with the German Fatherland, shattered and dying as the result of the Nazi adventure. Earlier, we are tempted to think of Hitler, and the millennium which he promised to National Socialism in its hour of triumph, when the vulgar, insignificant little man who incarnates the Spirit of Evil proposes to the tragic hero a pact assuring him almost superhuman development of his genius, and guaranteeing him an adequate portion of time before the infernal

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settlement falls due. Possibly, too, the author may have intended to present in his two principal characters, the somber and solitary Leverkühn and the benevolent, ever-fluent Zeitblom, two aspects of German civilization, the man of intuition and the man of culture. But as is almost always the case with Mann's symbols they seem, as if by design, to leave incomplete the circle which they would purportedly draw around reality. For, after all, the Devil keeps his promise to the composer, who becomes by such means a musical genius of Beethoven's stature, gloriously accomplishing his life as an artist at the cost of his life as a man. It is hardly necessary to indicate where we should end if we were to pursue this parallel into the actual political world. Here, as elsewhere in Mann, allegory forms less a single system than a series of consonances, refractions, and echoes, than an effort to find, for a brief moment, underlying correspondences. To read *Doctor Faustus* as a complete political allegory would be to judge it in the first place as a didactic piece of propaganda, and in the second as internally contradictory.

Other great writers in the German language of the same generation as Mann, or of the generation immediately following his own, have tried to fuse into one whole the secrets of magic and those hardly less dangerous secrets of wisdom; others have looked, like him, to some half-esoteric theory of knowledge for an explanation of the universe afforded neither by the bourgeois nor the revolutionary materialism of their time; others, too, have opposed the principle of contradiction. Allegory or myth may serve as common denominator for minds wholly unlike in other respects and completely foreign to each other: Spengler and Kassner, Gundolf and Jung, Rilke and George, Kafka, Jünger, and Kayserling show traces here and there of the vitalism of Paracelsus, the Orphism of Goethe's last years, the Titanism of Hölderlin, Novalis' angelic theurgy, or the subversive Zoroastrianism of Nietzsche. All have to some extent inherited views which are humanistic in part, and in part hermetic, passed down from the German Renaissance to German Romanticism; all have tried to transcend human destiny in terms of universal destiny; all have followed, or caught some glimpse of, methods for developing knowledge which engage the will or the imagination; all have sought for a truth too near the center of things not to be also subterranean.

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If Mann belongs to the main current of German literature, in direct line of descent from Goethe, it is perhaps because in abiding simply by his calling as novelist he has learned that study and description of the average individual counteracts day-dreaming, for one thing, and dogmatic systematization, for another. The result is that even in the pursuit of the unknown he often evinces a kind of pragmatism not unlike that to which Faust in the Second Part of *Faust* comes before his death. As in the commentary made by Goethe himself upon his *Primeval Orphic Sayings,* where seemingly ineffable truths are voluntarily reduced to the level of somewhat prosy exhortations toward righteous living, *The Magic Mountain,* that central massif in Mann's work, tends to emphasize in the character of Hans Castorp the simplest and most exoteric virtues, kindness, honesty, modesty, coupling them only with the courage or common sense needed to keep such qualities from falling, as so often happens, into the service of longstanding or newly formed prejudice. In *Doctor Faustus,* on the contrary, the emphasis is put upon the quality of excess in genius, to the exclusion of every virtue and every vice inherent in the average man; but the fact that this adventure, placed like Leverkühn's music itself at the highest pitch perceptible to the human ear, is reported to us by the very commonplace character who acts as narrator seems to show Mann's persistent need for upholding ordinary humanity alongside of such genius. This pedestrian Doctor Zeitblom analyzes even what appalls him, loves what is greater than himself, and serves his weird hero as confidant, collaborator, and counsellor. Nothing is more like Goethe than this use of the mean as critic of the extreme. What we are offered here is the rather pedagogical description of madness by reason, of the unconscious, or rather the supraconscious by the conscious, of the wizard by the professor; that eternal Luther incarnated in the ex-theologian Leverkühn (who is devil-ridden like the man of the Wartburg), is described for us by the eternal Goethe, or rather, by the eternal Eckermann represented here at a distinctly bourgeois level by the academic Zeitblom. It is as though the impossible and inexpressible could not be brought to realization in words by Mann except through this filtering substance made up of the sensible, the prosaic, the nearly commonplace, and in any case the merely human.

Even the style of Mann, somewhat slow in pace and at times

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heavily descriptive, carrying over into the dialogue the paraphrasis and courteous formulas of a bygone age, is less hermetic than exegetic. That cautious advance which takes up no new point until the preceding has been properly exhausted, that thesis which perpetually produces its own antithesis, reminds us at once of medieval scholasticism and of Renaissance scholia. The endless dialectic interpretation in *Doctor Faustus,* the almost frenzied extension of analysis in the *Joseph* volumes (where are set forth with rabbinic meticulosity Joseph's seventeen reasons, among others implied, for resisting Potiphar's wife) correspond historically to a type of oblique thinking in which Mann shares; they also express his determination not to rationalize, but to scrutinize with reason's aid the vast complexity of a world which will always defy purely human categories. It follows, therefore, that his style tends not only to conserve the logical structure of language in its strictest form, but to emphasize this logical pattern even at the sacrifice of realism in dialogue, thus preserving for discourse its classical role of an intellectual rather than an emotional medium of expression. At certain strategic points of his work, in places where the unutterable or the inadmissible are in question, he proceeds not in the manner of modern poets explosively breaking syntactic connections but in passing from the current language to one more secret, which is sometimes a learned language as well. The near parody of archaism in *The Holy Sinner,* the extraordinary, dream-like French, slightly distorted as it is by foreigners, which the lovers speak in *The Magic Mountain,* the German of Luther's time which Leverkühn employs in his delirium and his confession, all these are examples of such protective, indirect language. At a much lower level the lisping of Potiphar's wife and relapses into dialect on the part of Frau von Tümmler serve also as rudimentary forms of secret languages, and are thinly veiled, half-conscious expressions of desire. Mann's deliberate stylistic complexity matches the painstaking thoroughness of his investigation of reality; his problem is to keep the reader, like the character, from advancing too fast, and only on the surface. Hence the slow, patient unwinding of thought and of symbol in these works, very different from the haughty obscurity of a poet like George where the abstruse flashes with a diamond's fire, or from the triply locked allegory of a novelist like Kafka. Mann's discursive commentary stops just short of vulgar didacticism, and where it

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leaves off myth takes on. Imbedded in the heavy ore of everyday existence and formed to be seen only by watchful eyes, myth is for him but a more hidden explanation.

Accustomed as we are to an almost academic definition of the term *humanism,* we may ask whether or not a mind so concerned with the irrational, and sometimes with the occult, so open to change as almost to welcome chaos, can still be called *humanist.* Mann has himself given something like an answer in advance to this question when in trying to define the ultimate significance of Freud's work he speaks of a "humanism of the future" which will recognize truths about mankind quite unknown to the humanism of the past. Certainly Mann deserves an appellation which in our time no longer applies exclusively to lovers of ancient culture based on the study of man, but which tends more and more to designate a philosophy and way of life founded upon human values. He rightly belongs to that series of minds who are traditionalist in that they take full stock of past riches, but revolutionary in that they are constantly reinterpreting human thought and conduct; experience makes them prudent, and they are often secretive out of necessity; for them all arts and sciences, myth and dream, the known and the unknown, and human substance itself are alike the objects of an investigation which will go on as long as mankind endures. In our day, when man is cut off from his normal environment by too rapid and too dangerous acquisitions, when he discards the past but dreads the future, elated and at the same time disturbed he seems less capable than ever of self-examination or of objective appraisal of the world; in such a time the novel as developed by Thomas Mann stands out as one of the rare contemporary productions which persist in seeing us *sub specie vitae et sub specie mortis, sub specie saeculi et sub specie aeternitatis.*

(Translated from the French
by Grace Frick, in collaboration with the author)

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Haim Hazaz*

THE SERMON

Yudka was no speaker. He didn't make public addresses, never took part in the debate at general meetings or at conventions, not even just to make a point of order. So he was considered a man whose strength was not in self-expression. And, even though he was not just as he was considered to be, his reputation had its effect; it became second nature to him, so that he quite forgot how to open his mouth in public and say something in proper form, whether it was important or no more than a jest. That was why the boys were astounded when they heard he proposed to deliver a formal statement before the committee; and the committee, whose proceedings were open only to its members and to individuals called in before it, was convened at that time for no other reason than to hear him speak.

The committee members sat in a single row at the green table, right and left of their chairman, all clean-cut and positive, like captains and heroes in council. They eyed him curiously, waiting to hear him say something not yet heard or known, except the chairman, who gazed straight at the table, apparently dreaming or drowsing, with cool eyes.

Like a man doing his duty, the chairman spoke a few words of introduction, and was silent and sat down as though he hadn't opened his mouth, and there were no one else in the room.

Yudka drew up stiffly, looking harried and confused, so much did he have to say and so little did he know how to begin.

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It is beyond belief, how confused and how harried he was! This quarryman, this cleaver of mountains, this splitter of rocks, this one who went out so fearlessly on night patrols, no sooner had to speak publicly before his comrades, than he lost himself completely from fright.

They waited, and he said nothing. The chairman again spoke, directly to the green covered table: "*Haver* Yudka has the floor."

Yudka stood there crumbling inwardly and the sweat drops came out on his brow.

"You wanted to make a statement." The chairman glanced slantwise at him. "Well then, speak. We're listening."

As for the committee members, some looked aside, some stared off into space, and were silent.

At last Yudka passed his hand over his forehead, and said in the soft, slurred accent of the South of Russia: "I didn't come here to make a speech, only to say something important. . . . Really, I shouldn't be the one to speak. . . . Do you know what it is to speak when it's best for you to keep still?"

He looked down the line of seats, parting his lips in an injured smile, faint and sickly.

"But I must speak!" He fixed his eyes in a blank stare, his face clouding. "I don't understand anything at all . . . I no longer understand. It's been years since I've understood. . . ."

"What don't you understand?" the chairman asked him calmly, like a judge trained to be patient with the public.

"Everything!" Yudka called out with passion, "Everything! But that's nonsense. Let's leave that for now. All I want to know is: What are we doing here?"

"Doing where?" The chairman did not follow him.

"Here! In this place, or in Palestine. In general. . . ."

"*I* don't understand!" The chairman spread his hands wonderingly, and his lips twisted in a mocking smile. "Now *I* don't understand either. . . ."

"That's a different way of not understanding," Yudka rejoined. "That's probably your way of mocking me."

One of the committee members broke into a broad grin, and

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tapped his fingers on the table top. Yudka felt his smile, but lowered his eyes, pretending not to see.

"Get back to the subject!" the chairman demanded. "Make the statement you want to make, without argument."

"I want to state," Yudka spoke with an effort, in low, tense tones, "that I am opposed to Jewish history. . . ."

"What?" The chairman looked about him to each side.

The *haverim* exchanged glances in astonishment, and that one who had smiled at first could no longer control himself, and a short, explosive laugh escaped him.

"I do not respect Jewish history!" Yudka repeated the same refrain. " 'Respect' is really not the word, but what I said before: I'm opposed to it. . . ."

Now again that *haver,* a lively fellow by nature, burst into laughter and all the others joined in.

Yudka turned and looked at him.

"Why you're laughing," his voice was dulled and measured and serious beyond words, "is because you took my wife from me. . . ."

At once they all fell silent and shrank, as from some imminent penalty, and that comrade who had laughed was thrown into confusion, shifting and slouching, and he sat there with a bowed back and restless eyes.

The chairman struck four or five strokes with all his might on the bell, and then again three more from sheer shock and helplessness, and not knowing what to say at that time.

"I think that's how it is," Yudka went on, after the ringing had ceased. "If I were in his place, I would laugh too every time I saw him . . . not straight in his face, but like that . . . it's a different kind of laugh! I couldn't help laughing, I wouldn't dare . . . I couldn't manage to do anything else or say anything . . . for I would feel terribly ashamed then . . . terribly ashamed! I couldn't talk to him freely, for example, let's say about literature. Or perhaps make my confession and weep . . . I can't explain it very well, but it's clear! I've thought it all out and made sure that that's how it is, but it's not important. . . ."

For a while there was quiet, a total, final quiet.

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Then the chairman stirred, beetling his heavy eyebrows, and spoke with gruff, ironical severity: "*Haver* Yudka, I call you to order! If you have something to say, please, say it briefly, no wandering off the subject. And if it's history you want to talk about, then the university is the place for you!"

"It's on the subject, it's on the subject!" Yudka hastened to reply with a propitiating smile. "I can't proceed now without history. I've thought a great deal about it, many nights, every night when I'm on guard. . . ."

The chairman shrugged and spread his hands as one who is skeptical. "Speak!" he ordered, to cut it short.

Yudka became as before: confused and harried, as though at that very moment some ill fortune had befallen him and he had come to pain and torment.

"You've already heard that I'm opposed to Jewish history." He coughed in shame and unease, as he began the sermon. "I want to explain why. Just be patient a little while. . . . First, I will begin with the fact that we have no history at all. That's a fact. And that's the *zagvozdka*. I don't know how to say it in Hebrew. . . . In other words, that's where the shoe pinches. Because we didn't make our own history, the *goyim* made it for us. Just as they used to put out our candles on Sabbath, milk our cows and light our ovens on Sabbath, so they made our history for us to suit themselves, and we took it from them as it came. But it's not ours, it's not ours at all! Because we didn't make it, we would have made it differently, we didn't want it to be like that, it was only others who wanted it that way and they forced it on us, whether we liked it or not, which is a different thing altogether. . . . In that sense, and in every other sense, I tell you, in every other sense, we have no history of our own. Have we? It's clear as can be! And that's why I'm opposed to it, I don't recognize it, it doesn't exist for me! What's more, I don't respect it, although 'respect' is not the word, still I don't respect it . . . I don't respect it at all! But the main thing is, I'm opposed to it. What I mean is, I don't accept it. . . ."

The storm within him made him shake from side to side like an ox refusing the yoke, he swung his hands about as if he were moving stone or sorting lumber, and he was swept along in his speech so that he could no longer halt.

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"I don't accept it!" he repeated, with the stubborn insistence of one who had come to a final, fixed opinion. "Not a single point, not a line, not a dot. Nothing, nothing . . . nothing at all! Will you believe me? Will you believe me? You can't even imagine how I'm opposed to it, how I reject it, and how . . . how . . . I don't respect it! Now, look! Just think . . . what is there in it? Just give me an answer: What is there in it? Oppression, defamation, persecution, martyrdom. And again oppression, defamation, persecution, and martyrdom. And again and again and again, without end. . . . That's what's in it, and nothing more! After all, it's . . . it's . . . it bores you to death, it's just plain dull! Just let me mention one fact, just one little fact. It's well known that children everywhere love to read historical fiction. That's where you get action, see, bold deeds, heroes, great fighters, and fearless conquerors. In a word, a world full of heroism. Now, here now, in Palestine, our children love to read, unless they're stupid. I know this for a fact. I've looked into it. Yes, they read, but historical novels about *goyim,* not about Jews. Why is that so? It's no accident. It's simply because Jewish history is dull, uninteresting. It has no glory or action, no heroes and conquerors, no rulers and masters of their fate, just a collection of wounded, hunted, groaning, and wailing wretches, always begging for mercy. You can see for yourselves that it can't be interesting. The least you can say is it's uninteresting. I would simply forbid teaching our children Jewish history. Why the devil teach them about their ancestors' shame? I would just say to them: 'Boys, from the day we were exiled from our land we've been a people without a history. Class dismissed. Go out and play football. . . .' But that's all in passing. So, let me proceed. I'm sure you won't take me wrong. I know that there is heroism in the way we stood up to all that oppression and suffering. I take it into account. . . . But . . . I don't care for that kind of heroism. Don't laugh . . . I don't care for it! I prefer an entirely different kind of heroism. First of all, please understand me, it's nothing but the heroism of despair. With no way out, anyone can be a hero. Whether he wants to or not, he must be, and there is no credit or honor in that. In the second place, this heroism after all amounts to great weakness, worse than weakness, a kind of special talent for corruption and decay. That's how it is! This type of hero sooner or later begins to pride himself on his 'heroism' and

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brags about it: 'See what great torments I withstand! See what untold shame and humiliation I suffer! Who can compare with me?' See, we don't merely suffer torments. It's more than that, we love these torments too, we love torment for its own sake. . . . We want to be tortured, we are eager, we yearn for it. . . . Persecution preserves us, keeps us alive. Without it, we couldn't exist. . . . Did you ever see a community of Jews that was not suffering? I've never seen one. A Jew without suffering is an abnormal creature, hardly a Jew at all, half a *goy*. . . . That's what I mean; it's just such 'heroism' that shows our weakness . . . suffering, suffering, suffering! Everything is rotten around suffering. . . . Please notice, I said *around*, not *in* suffering. There's a tremendous difference. . . . Everything, everything around it rots: history, life itself, all actions, customs, the group, the individual, literature, culture, folk songs . . . all in all! The world grows narrow, cramped, and upside down. A world of darkness, perversion, and contradiction. Sorrow is priced higher than joy, pain easier to understand than happiness, wrecking better than building, slavery preferred to redemption, dream before reality, hope more than the future, faith before common sense, and so on to the end of all perversions . . . it's horrible! A new psychology is created, a kind of moonlight psychology. . . . The night has its own special psychology, quite different from the day's. I don't mean the psychology of a man at night, that's something separate, but the psychology of night itself. You may not have noticed it, perhaps, but it's there, it's there. I know it. I sense it every time I stand guard. The whole world behaves quite differently too in the day, nature moves in a different way, every grass, every stone, every scent, all different, different. . . ."

"Yudka," the chairman cut in, and spoke half jesting, half beseeching, "your thoughts are very fine, but have pity on us. Why did you have the committee convened?"

"Wait, wait," said Yudka hastily, "I haven't come to the main thing. You don't know yet . . . I have something in mind, I have something in mind. . . . You'll soon see. Just be patient a little. . . ."

"Let him talk," spoke up one of the committee, "let him talk."

"But," the chairman began dubiously.

Just then Yudka unintentionally, without thinking, shouted at him: "Quiet!"

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The chairman was overborne and submitted in silence.

"I'm not wandering from the subject. I'm speaking about principles, about basic things. . . ." Yudka fumbled wide-eyed, his earnestness written on his face and his mind obviously entangled and exalted, laboring and driving to something.

In a short while, he began again:

"I've already told you, and I beg you to remember that a special, perverted, fantastic psychology has grown up among us, if I may say so, a moonlight psychology, altogether different in every way from other people's. . . . We love suffering, for through suffering we are able to be Jews; it preserves us and maintains us, it proves we are bold and heroic, braver than any people in the whole world. I admit, I am forced to admit that this is heroic indeed, in a certain sense. Men, you know, abuse many fine and noble words . . . in a certain sense suffering is heroic. And in a sense even decay is heroic and degradation is heroic . . . that is exactly the kind of people we are. We don't fight, or conquer, or rule. We have no desire, no will for it. Rather, we submit, we suffer without limit, willingly, lovingly. We say, actually: You shall not conquer us, nor break us, nor destroy us! There is no power on earth strong enough for that . . . because power has its limits, but there is no limit, no end to our suffering. . . . In fact, the more we are oppressed, the greater we grow; the more we are degraded, the greater we think is our honor; the more we are made to suffer, the stronger we become. For this is our staple food, it is our elixir of life. . . . It's all so beautifully arranged! A character like that, imagine it, a nature so perfected . . . and that explains everything: Exile, martyrdom, Messiah . . . these are three which are one, all to the same purpose, the same intention. . . . How is it put, somewhere: 'The threefold cord. . . .' "

" 'And the threefold cord is not quickly broken,' " contributed one of the committee.

"That's it!" Yudka seized upon the verse excitedly. "Not quickly broken! Not quickly! Never, never. . . . These three support each other, aid and abet each other, so that never will the Jews be redeemed in all the world . . . so that they wander from nation to nation and country to country, age upon age to the end of all ages, the weight of the laws falling upon them, the fury of the lawless rising against them, everywhere trials and tribulations and foes and hatred

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on every hand. . . . Exile, exile . . . Oh oh, how they love it, how they hold it fast! This is the most sacred thing, the most beloved, intimate, closest to their hearts, nearer and dearer than Jerusalem, more *Jewish* than Jerusalem, deeper and purer. Far more, there's simply no comparison! Is this paradoxical? But that's how it is. . . . Wait now, don't talk!" He hurriedly gestured to each side, though nobody made any attempt to interrupt. "Let me tell you how I look at it. . . ."

He rubbed his hand over his face and his lips, as though coming up out of a tub; he muted his voice and whispered, as though it were a deep secret.

"The Exile, that is our pyramid, and it has martyrdom for a base and Messiah for its peak. And . . . and . . . the Talmud, that is our Book of the Dead. . . . In the very beginning, as far back as the Second Temple, we began to build it. Even that far back we planned it, we laid the foundations. . . . Exile, martyrdom, Messiah. . . . Do you grasp the deep cunning hidden in this wild fantasy, the cold moonlight with which it flames . . .? Do you grasp it? Just think, just think! Millions of men, a whole people plunging itself into this madness and sunk in it for two thousand years! Giving up to it its life, its very existence, its character, submitting to affliction, suffering, tortures. Agreed that it is foolish, a lunatic dream. But a dream, that is, a vision, an ideal. . . . What an uncanny folk! What a wonderful, awful people! Awful, awful to the point of madness! For look, it scorns the whole world, the whole world and all its fighters and heroes and wise men and poets all together! Fearsome and blind! A bottomless abyss. . . . No, one could go mad!"

He formed the last words soundlessly on his lips and stood as though in trance, pale, with his mouth open and a fixed stare.

The chairman invited him to be seated. "Sit down," he said, pointing to an empty chair.

"What?" He came to himself, speaking as out of a maze. "But it's not just a fantasy, it's more than fantasy . . . fantastic, to be sure. But a necessary fantasy. . . . Why necessary? What is its purpose? A very necessary purpose, let me tell you, a vitally necessary purpose! This madness is practical, it is very deliberate, it has a clearly understood aim, and it is thought out to the finest detail. . . . Look here, here we have a single element, as slight as can be, a trifling anec-

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dote, with consequences as grave, as far-reaching as can be . . . I'm speaking of the belief in the Messiah. That's a typical Jewish fantasy, the most typical of all! Isn't it? . . . A single myth, all that is left of the whole past, the closing speech of all that great drama, after the Judges, the Prophets, and the Kings, after the First Temple and the Second, after the wars and wonders—well, and all the rest of it. . . . And that's what we are left with: a single, simple legend, and no more. Not much, you say? You are mistaken. On the contrary, it is a great deal. It is far too much. You might think, it's no more than a trifle, a kindergarten legend. But it's not so. It's by no means so innocent. It has such a cunning, do you know, like that of well-tried, ancient men, a cunning of utmost subtlety, so ill-starred, so *podlaya*—that is, so corrupt a cunning. . . . Let me add, by the way, it's a wonderful legend, a tale of genius, although—apart from the philosophy and symbolism in it—not free of caricature, you know, not without a biting Jewish wit and humor; he comes on an ass! A great, a colossal, a cosmic image—not on a snorting steed, but precisely on a donkey, on the most miserable and insignificant of animals. . . . And this was enough to determine a people's fate and chart its course in the world for endless ages, for all eternity, this, and not the disputes of the schools of Shammai and Hillel. I'm not familiar with these things, I never learned Talmud, but it's quite clear. . . . It's an obvious thing, a certainty that if not for this myth it would all have been different. For then, they would finally have had to go right back to Palestine or somehow or other pass on out of the world. At any rate, they would have had to think of something or do something, somehow or other, to bring it all to an end. . . ."

Once more the chairman thought of making him bring his speech to an end, for it seemed to him that the whole discussion was out of place in that committee. He turned to both sides, consulting the committee members with a glance: "What do you think?" They signed to him to let him go on. He accepted it and settled back.

Yudka did not notice the exchange of signals at all, but went on: "Now there is no need. Now they needn't think about anything or do anything, not a single thought or the slightest action. King Messiah will do it all for them, and they have nothing to do but sit and wait for his coming. In fact, it's forbidden to get involved in the whole matter, to force the end. Forbidden! What can this

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thing mean?" His voice shook. "What can it mean? . . . Under orders, under orders to stay in Exile until in *Heaven* they decide to redeem them. Not by their own will or their own acts, but from Heaven; not in the way of nature, but by wonders and miracles . . . you understand?"

His eyes passed down the seated line, and he stood there marveling and struck dumb.

"Do you understand?" he repeated, out of wonder and oppression of mind, "They do nothing, not an effort, nothing at all, just sit and wait. . . . They invented a Messiah in Heaven, but not as a legend out of the past, as a promise for their future. That's very important, terribly important—and they trust in him to come and bring their redemption, while they themselves are obliged to do nothing at all and there you have it. . . . How can they believe in such a thing! And so to believe! To believe for two thousand years! Two thousand years! . . . How, how can men who are by no means simple, who are no fools at all, on the contrary, very shrewd men, men with more than a touch of skepticism, men who are practical, and maybe even a bit too practical, how can they believe something like that, *a kind of thing like that*—and not just believe, but trust in it, pin their whole life upon it, the whole substance of their life and survival, their national, historic fate? . . . And quite seriously, in full earnest! For truly they believe with perfect faith . . . the whole thing is that they really believe! And yet, and yet, in the secrecy of their hearts, you know, deep down, in some hidden fold, some geometric point down there in their hearts—*somewhat* they don't believe, just the faintest hint; at any rate, that he will come now, at this very moment, that he will come during their own lives, in their day, and this, of course, is the core of the matter. . . . It would not be possible for them not to *not* believe, even though, generally speaking, they believe with perfect faith! See? . . . This is a Jewish trait too, a very Jewish trait: to believe with perfect faith, with the mad and burning faith of all the heart and all the soul, and yet *somewhat* not to believe, the least little bit and to let this tiny bit be decisive . . . I can't explain it well. But that's how it is. I am not mistaken! How complicated it all is! . . . Redemption is the chief of all their desires, the whole substance of their hopes, and yet they have bound themselves, locked their hands and feet in chains, and sealed their own

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doom, guarding and observing their own sentence with unimaginable pedantic strictness, not to be redeemed for ever and ever! Well, now then . . . now then . . . the birth pangs of Messiah. . . . That's an entire, separate chapter, a very interesting chapter. . . . Why must there be, according to the folk belief, why must a time of great troubles come before the end of days? What for? . . . Why couldn't they do without the troubles? After all, he is Messiah and he has unlimited power. . . . Why couldn't he come amid joy, with goodness and blessings, in the midst of peace? . . . And look: It's not troubles for Israel's enemies particularly, for the Gentiles, but especially for Israel! Nor are these troubles such, let's say, that would make them repent and so on, but just troubles for the sake of trouble, with no rhyme or reason, a whole flood of troubles, plagues, and oppressions and every kind of torment, until the eyes of Israel grow weary with beholding the grief and agony, till they can no longer bear it, and they despair of redemption. . . . What is this? A *Weltanschauung*? Historic wisdom? Or is it perhaps what one dare not hint: simply their own fear of redemption? . . . I am just lost!"

He really looked lost, standing there. He seemed for a moment to have forgotten himself completely, and not to know where he was.

"It seems to me," he said, with a vague, sickly smile, "I once heard there was a sage or a pious man, I forget who, that said it already: 'Let him come, and may I not see it,' or something like that. . . . Maybe it was a joke, a cynical remark, or just chatter. Or maybe it was a great truth, revealing a secret deep, deep buried. . . . How was this myth ever invented at all? Not invented, no . . . I don't mean to say that . . . because in the beginning surely there was nothing but hope and longing for the kingdom of the House of David. . . . But how did it become what it turned into afterwards, the classic creation of the people, one might say the creation of its highest genius, the eternal creation of the people of Israel? What made it, more than any other myth sink so deep and spread so wide in the folk-mind that it became common to everyone, rabbis and thinkers and the mass of people, scholars and illiterates, man, woman, and child? What was there in it to let it dye our very heart's blood, and rise to a kind of dogma of faith and religion, the foundation of the whole people's life for all ages, our national idea, our vision in history, our political program, and so on? Whatever the answer—it did! That's the

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fact. It means there must be a profound kinship, a fundamental bond between this myth and the spirit of our people, if it thrust so deep! It means there is a basic harmony, a full and perfect unity between it and our people's ideal, between it and the people's will, and the direction it desires to go! . . . There's not the least doubt: It's quite clear!"

He stopped for a moment, and his face turned dull and pale. It was quiet, as quiet as in the rainy season just before the rains come, a waiting, oppressive, gloomy quiet.

"Ye-es . . ." he said on a long, groaning breath, as a spoken conclusion of his thoughts, "such is that wild, enthusiastic, moonlit fantasy of theirs . . . the fantasy they need for such practical purposes, for their well-understood ends. Just as I've already told you . . . because . . . because. . . ."

He halted and could not speak on. And in that paralysis his eyes went from one to another in a sort of driven frenzy.

"Because they don't want to be saved!" he blurted out all in one breath.

Again he was still, looking from side to side like one who fears he has been trapped by his own foolishness.

"Because they don't want to be saved!" he repeated, seeking assurance in speech. "That is the deliberate intent of this myth, that is its practical effect, consciously or unconsciously, not to be saved, not ever to go back to the land of their fathers. . . . I don't say that it is conscious, necessarily. But if it's unconscious, it's even worse. . . . They *really* believe redemption will come, I repeat it, again, they believe in all truth and sincerity, they hope for it, aspire to it, and yet they *intend* that it should not come. This is not deceit, it's not duplicity at all. I'm sure of it, I'm sure of it. . . . Here something is at work beneath the surface, something rooted in the depths of their heart, something unconscious. . . . It's not for nothing that that myth became so beloved among the people, and holds such sway that they became like some kind of poets, not concerned at all with the world as it is, but altogether given up to dream and legend. Two thousand years it has consoled them, and for two thousand more they will live by its warmth, in dream, in mourning, in expectation, and in secret fear of it, and never will they tire. And that's the whole essence of Judaism, the whole character of Israel, and of its love of

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Zion, and the holiness of the land, and the Holy Tongue, and the end of days, and everything altogether. . . . But let's leave this, now. For what if they really have something to fear? What if it's true that Judaism can manage to survive somehow in Exile, but here, in the Land of Israel, it's ve-ery doubtful? . . . What if this country is fated to take the place of religion, if it's a grave danger to the survival of the people, if it replaces an enduring center with a transient center, a solid foundation with a vain and empty foundation? And what if this Land of Israel is a stumbling block and a catastrophe, if it's the end and finish of everything? . . ."

A queer, weary and ill-defined smile flickered on his lips.

"Well? . . ." He bent his eyes on them as though waiting for an answer. "What if they're right? What if their instinct doesn't deceive them? . . . Just see how here, here, in Israel, they are against us, all the old settlers, all those pious old Jews, simple Jews like those that ever lived in any other place or time. Don't their very faces tell us plainly: 'We are no Zionists, we are God-fearing Jews! We don't want a Hebrew State or a national home. What we want is to go up peacefully to be buried on the Mount of Olives, or down to pray at the Wailing Wall undisturbed. . . .' Now, that means something! I won't talk about our Mizrachi people, those little naive semi-sophisticates of our Zionist movement. I'm speaking about the people, the people of the root and foundation. Well, then? . . . I'll tell you! To my mind, if I am right, then Zionism and Judaism are not at all the same, but two things quite different from each other, and maybe even two things directly opposite to each other! At any rate, far from the same. When a man can no longer be a Jew, he becomes a Zionist. I am not exaggerating. The Biluim were primarily very imperfect Jews. It wasn't the pogroms that moved them—that's all nonsense, the pogroms—they were falling apart within, they were rootless and crumbling within. Zionism begins with the wreckage of Judaism, from the point where the strength of the people fails. That's a fact! Nobody has yet begun to understand Zionism. It is far deeper, far more pregnant with vast and fateful consequences than appears on the surface, or than people say. Herzl said no more than the rudiments of it. Ahad Ha'am said nothing at all, just another idea that came into the head of an inquiring Jew. At most, he went around advising Jews who had somehow determined to establish a new com-

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munity that they'd do better to set up a Jewish study circle or build a school or cemetery first. . . . What?" He turned to one of the committee who had opened his mouth to speak.

"Oh, nothing," that one chuckled, "I just remembered something. I had an uncle, he was a clever fellow. The Bolsheviks killed him. For nothing, just killed him. He used to say: 'Ahad Ha'am is the Habad school of Zionism.' "

The committee heard him and enjoyed it, but the chairman felt it his duty to reprove him.

"Don't interrupt!" he turned and told him.

Yudka may not have heard, or may not have understood, so he stood bemused and smiling.

"I'll finish soon," he said with a deprecating smile.

For a while he waited, collected his thoughts, and sought a new beginning.

"Yes. . . ." He coughed two or three times. "Right away. . . . What was it I wanted to say? That is . . . about Zionism. Yes! In a word, no one has yet said the right . . . the . . . the hidden, the deepest . . . no one has revealed, or explained, fully . . . just talk, elementary things, banalities, you know, empty, meaningless phrases. . . ."

"Oh, they've explained," one of the committee broke in, jesting. "The Brith Shalom, the wise men of the University, and all the other little professors. . . ."

"You can't prove anything by idiots," another spoke up offhandedly.

"Ernest Fig . . ." went on the first, referring to a public figure who was regarded as something of a fool and an exhibitionist.

"*Ernst is' nicht fähig, und Fäig is' nicht ernst . . .*" rejoined the other with a witticism.

"I will ask you not to interrupt and not to talk across the table!" The chairman straightened up and took over control. "Please continue."

"All right." Yudka began again, struggling with the words. "Of course I'm not the one to say what Zionism is. I'm not the man for it. Even though I've wracked my brain over it, and thought many, many thoughts. But that's not important. . . . One thing is clear. Zionism is not continuity, it is no medicine for an ailment. That's

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nonsense! It is uprooting and destruction, it's the opposite of what has been, it's the end. . . . It has almost nothing to do with the people, a thoroughly non-popular movement, much more apart from the people than the Bund, more than assimilationism, more even than Communism. The fact is, it turns away from the people, is opposed to it, goes against its will and spirit, undermines it, subverts it, and turns off in a different direction, to a certain distant goal; Zionism, with a small group at its head, is the nucleus of a different people. . . . Please note that: not new or restored, but *different.* And if anyone doesn't agree, well, I'm very sorry, but either he's mistaken or he's deluding himself. What? Perhaps it isn't so? I believe that this land of Israel already is no longer Jewish. Even now, let alone in the future. Time will tell, as they say. That's its hidden core, that's the power it will yet unfold. Yes! At any rate, it's a different Judaism, if you choose to fool yourselves and keep that name, but certainly not the same as survived for two thousand years, not at all the same. That is . . . well, nothing. You understand? And nothing will help, neither grandfathers and grandmothers nor antiquities, nor even Hebrew literature which has grown like a crust on the past, and clings to the old small towns of our Exile. All wasted! *Kaput!* I'll take the liberty of mentioning one detail, not directly related, but it has some bearing, a tangential bearing . . . a fine expression, you know," his lips twisted in a smiling grimace. "So round and smooth: tangential. . . . Well, then, it's well known that we're all ashamed to speak Yiddish, as though it were some sort of disgrace. I intentionally said 'ashamed.' Not that we dislike, or fear, or refuse, but we're ashamed. But Hebrew, and none other than Sephardic Hebrew, strange and foreign as it is, we speak boldly, with a kind of pride or vanity, even though it isn't as easy and natural as Yiddish, and even though it hasn't the vitality, the sharp edge, and healthy vigor of our folk language. What's the meaning of this? What's the reason for it? For no reason at all, just to take on such an immense burden? But it's quite simple: This community is not continuing anything, it is different, something entirely specific, almost not Jewish, practically not Jewish at all. . . . In the same way, we are ashamed to be called by the ordinary, customary Jewish names, but we are proud to name ourselves, say, Artzieli or Avnieli. Haimovitch, you will agree, that's a Jewish name, entirely

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too Jewish, but Avnieli—that's something else again, the devil knows what, but it has a strange sound, not Jewish at all, and so proud! That's why we have so many Gideons, Ehuds, Yigals, Tirzahs . . . what? . . . And it doesn't matter that we had the same kind of thing before, that was with assimilationists, that's easy to understand. There we were living among strangers, people who were different and hostile, and we had to hide, to dissimulate, to be lost to sight, to appear different from what we really were. But here? Aren't we among our own, all to ourselves, and there is no need for shame, or for hiding, or anyone to hide from. Well then, how do you expect to understand this? . . . That's it! That's the whole thing, point by point. It's obvious, no continuity but a break, the opposite of what was before, a new beginning. . . . A little detail, quite unimportant, it didn't deserve going into so much, but it is a symptom of far more . . . I've gone into side issues. I won't keep you much longer. I'm finishing. In a word, this is the aim: one people, and above all, a people creating its history for itself, with its own strength and by its own will, not others making it for him, and history, not the chronicles of a congregation, anything but *chronicles,* that's how it stands. For a people that doesn't live in its own land and doesn't rule itself has no history. That's my whole idea. I've already told you and I repeat again, and I'll say it again and again, day and night . . . is it clear? Is it clear?" And all at once his words ran together and his voice broke and sputtered with feeling, his eyes flickered to and fro like one who doesn't know which way to go. "With this I've said a great deal, the whole thing . . . everything I had on my mind . . . and now I don't want to say anything more. I have nothing more to add. . . . Enough!"

He noisily pulled back a chair and cast himself heavily into it, wiping the sweat off his face with his palm, and sat there all in a turmoil, with his face flaming, his heart pounding, and his temples throbbing.

It grew quiet, like the stillness after a quarrel. The men were silent and sat uncertainly with altered countenance, not sure in their hearts nor easy in their minds, as though in doubt whether something might not be lost or lacking, or as if they were in mid-passage between where they had been and whither they were to come.

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Then the chairman lifted his eyes and spoke with a certain strain: "Have you finished?"

At that, Yudka jerked up and sprang to his feet.

"Right away, right away . . ." He spoke hastily and with some panic. "I said much too much. . . . That's not how I meant it, not like I thought. It came out by itself. The devil knows how . . . such nonsense! Trifles, side issues like that, about Yiddish there, and the names. . . . It was ridiculous, quite unnecessary. I see it myself. . . . But just those side issues, those unimportant details, you know, they leap to the tongue. . . . Well, it's all the same. What I mean, I really just wanted to explain . . . I no longer know how to tell you . . . the main thing, what I'm after. It's not just . . . yes! Well, now. Now to the main thing. I beg just a few more minutes of patience. . . ."

The group all straightened up and were lightened, as though he had rescued them from severe embarrassment, including the chairman, who bowed his head and sat staring at his finger nails.

"Say what you have to say," said he, "and let's see if we can't do it without philosophy. . . ."

(*Translated from the Hebrew by Ben Halpern*)

Coming in the Summer 1956 issue of PR:

COMMUNISM IN THE POST-STALINIST ERA,
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HERE AND NOW—HERE AND NOW!
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SIGMUND FREUD: 1856-1956

Alfred Kazin

PORTRAIT OF A HERO

The frontispiece to Volume II of Ernest Jones's biography[1] of him shows Freud in 1906, age fifty. With his arms militantly folded across his chest, the everlasting cigar in one hand, only one somber eye visible in this profile of his tensely reflective face, he sits for the photographer with such immense conscious self-possession that it is impossible not to see this calm but vibrant look of mastery as the goal of Freud's maturity and the manifestation of his intellectual authority. This, we say to ourselves out of the midst of Jones's almost thousand pages on Freud—this is what has persuaded so many who do not believe his science; this is the face of the founder, the father of his subject and the father in spirit to so many of his disciples; this is the face not of the pleasure principle but of transcendent consciousness; this is the man who in his dreams identified himself with Joseph, in his writings with Moses. This is the look that wins respect for the Jews and the deepest resentment—for this man lived apart from the greater world around him, and yet claimed to understand everything inside it. This is the look which I, living all my life among the Freudians, the disciples, have never seen in the flesh. For this is the face of a great man—a man who taught us not only to see, but, as he said, to "tolerate a piece of reality." This man transformed our sense of things. He is the only *kind* of man that ever works magic in our lives. By devotion to his task, he becomes the most aloof of men—the hero.

Ordinarily, the early life of a hero is not really significant. For

1 THE LIFE AND WORK OF SIGMUND FREUD, Vols. I and II. Basic Books. $6.75 each.

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what counts with him is not, as with us, the search for "maturity," for "integration," but the tales of his mastery over the secret and the forbidden, the recital of his ability to make nature yield up its secrets. The early struggles of the hero may have a purely dramatic element. For we who know what he must become can still watch with suspense as a Freud discovers cocaine and does not develop his discovery, or comes to the verge of discovering the neurone without fully realizing it. His destiny lies elsewhere, and generally, these early struggles are decisive only as they lead to the discovery of his true vocation. But in a man like Freud, whose interest so peculiarly was the self, and who even formally documented his science from his own dreams and self-analysis, this early period becomes the very material which the hero will rework into the fully forged personality he needs for his appointed work. For this reason the intensely Jewish background of Freud becomes not, as critics of psychoanalysis often say, a limitation of his knowledge to idle repressed ladies of the Jewish bourgeoisie in Vienna, but serves instead, as a Jewish background often does for certain thinkers, as a microcosm of the world, a guide to that larger reality in which they do not share. This confidence may not be valid. The point is that a Jew can think that it is, for he does see an essential unifying principle of identity running through human experience. The very mark of Freud's ability to speculate so largely on the basis of what would seem very restricted evidence is, indeed, a measure of his ability not merely to come to terms with himself, to suffer so many early anxieties and to rise above them—but to *use* these disabilities as a guide to the elucidation of many larger problems.

This, for me, is the fascination of Jones's first volume. And it is a measure of the unforced but remarkable artistic tact of Freud's biographer that even the second volume, which carries us to Freud in his sixties, should close so beautifully, like a musical *da capo,* on those probable childhood musings by the little Freud about his complicated family situation which, Jones thinks, explains Freud's passion for the truth and his aggressive independence in seeking it out. This link between early sexual curiosity and the passion for knowledge is, of course, standard Freudian doctrine. Freud applied it to the scientific side of Leonardo da Vinci, and Jones centers Freud's curiosity, finally, on his need to ferret out the truth about his half-brother

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Philipp, who was so much older that, since he was given to "joking" about it, he could be thought of as the mate of Freud's own mother. As Jones speculatively works it out, the little Freud thought that Philipp "evidently knew all the secrets," but that he could not be trusted to tell the truth about them. And so perhaps it was "this insignificant little man," Jones surmises, who "through his mere existence . . . fortuitously struck the spark that lit the future Freud's determination to trust himself alone, to resist the impulses to believe in others more than in himself. . . ." This explanation of Freud's inquisitive genius is something that one may be permitted to doubt in favor of the intrinsic gift of curiosity itself. And yet the decisive fact in Jones's account is exactly Freud's confidence that in his own situation he could find the nucleus of reality.

This kind of confidence reminds one of Thoreau's saying that a poet learns to watch his own moods as narrowly as a cat, and points to that gift for being convinced of the significance of one's own experiences that seems to me the essence of being an artist. But this confidence may also signify that spiritual ability to generalize on the basis of their restricted experiences which seems to be an essential of Jewish consciousness. Nothing is so astonishing in the history of the Jews as this disparity between their history of exile, of marginal existence, of actual worldly inexperience, even, in the ghetto —something which by contrast with Western civilization looks like a long sleep—and their belief that reality is consistent, all of one piece, and that where *they* are is perspective enough on the "world" and the world's great and the issues of heaven and earth. Indeed, one might even say that one can measure the degree of originality one finds among Jewish intellectuals by this ability to trust themselves, and even declare that where this faith in the essential correspondence between themselves and the world is at once intense and yet clouded by self-doubt, as in Kafka, the results in their work are significantly equivocal.

Now Freud would have assented to this "gift of conviction," as I call it, but would have located it not in the Jewish genius but in the scientific conviction of the biological identity of mankind. The mechanistic school of physiology in which he was trained under Brücke was the school that supplanted Schelling's romantic view of

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nature and established, in a succession of vital discoveries, basic examples of cause-and-effect in the body. Indeed, Freud was so wedded to positivism that in the absence of any empirical evidence he had to pronounce God an "illusion." But in point of fact this kind of empirical evidence is not always present in psychoanalysis either, for even where certain "confirmations" exist, they lie under the suspicion of being culturally instigated by psychoanalysis itself. The "proofs" that Freud found for his theories lay not so much in evidence—for some *part* of this evidence, by the very nature of the material, must always be beyond proof—*but in his way of reasoning solidly about material which only he could see.* It is precisely this enormous honesty and carefulness that make so curiously impressive a book like *Moses and Monotheism,* which is not merely unfounded on evidence, but at times preposterous because of Freud's suggestion that he may be just about to find evidence at any minute. Yet the book is anything but preposterous; indeed, it is strangely persuasive. The basis of this, I submit, is the wholly sane, orderly, scientific way in which Freud reasons, and which is so compelling in Freud's work that he convinces us of the reality of what he is discussing. When you look back, you can see that this air of leading us step by step to the truth, of considering all possible objections, is not always justified, for Freud often merely appears to consider objections. But the point is that Freud had an honest persuasion and that once he saw his subject, he opened up its possibilities honestly. Not everyone who is wedded to positivistic explanations has an instinct for the unexplored, and people who go in for Freud's kind of material rarely bother to reason at all. But he had the kind of mind that has both an instinct for the reality behind phenomena and a moral determination to find a cause for everything. And it is no accident that in him the wish for fame represents not only a hunger for success but a desire to find a reputation that will express the immense role he had to play.

Now this kind of mind, I feel, represents in Freud the Jewish belief in the essential logic of human experience, and it is this, as I see it, that enabled Freud to seize with such *conviction*—the essential mark of genius—on the basis of his early childhood experiences. Freud, by attributing inquisitiveness in general to early sexual curi-

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osity tended, if anything, to make this principle too hard and fast. For all biological explanations of human curiosity are too general to account for a Leonardo, a Newton, an Einstein, a Freud. But the sense of the presence of larger things within the restricted family circle, of things which we dare not think are real but which *are* real to us—this seems to me the essence of Freud's early struggles to accept his gift of divination. The drama, then, is not that Freud was eager for fame because he was "insecure," as so many people who in our age recognize only the "integrated," the "well-organized" personality seem to feel when they express their *surprise* that the great man had so many anxieties. Freud was indeed eager for fame, so much so that he was always looking for solutions in different fields that would make his name. (In the golden era of positivism, all subjects seemed to be laid out, so that it seemed that only keys were needed to the various locks; Freud characteristically inaugurated a new *field*.) The point about his early discoveries and near-discoveries, surely, is not only that Freud was trying desperately to become famous so that he could get some money to marry on and rise despite the usual restrictions against him as a Jew. He was so aware of his gift for something that he was trying to find the occasion that would allow him to discover it. Hence, as we see in all these early scientific efforts, he was either too impatient, as in the cocaine episode, where he recklessly tried it out on everyone; or, as in the neurone episode, too cautious, for he missed out, says Jones, by "not daring to pursue his thoughts to their logical—and not far-off—conclusion." In the account of his early scientific experiments we feel, indeed, that Freud had to a remarkable degree the gift of intellectual venturesomeness, but we feel, too, that it is precisely this gift of believing too easily on too little evidence, of *plunging*—as it must have seemed to his teachers—too recklessly from one field to another that shocked his innate scientific probity, pulled him to just short of the final prize, and then stopped him, probably more puzzled than anything else that he had not gone through to the end of his "hunch." In this early period, at least, he was, to the extent that he was inwardly the boldest of men, equally uncertain. He was shy about his boldness and ignorant, as yet, of where he would triumph. "I have often," he wrote once, "felt as if I had inherited all the passion of our ancestors when they defended the Temple, as if I could joyfully cast away my life

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in a great cause. And with all that I was always so powerless and could not express the flowing passions even by a word or a poem. So I have always suppressed myself and I believe that people must notice that in me."

This instinctive self-trust of the gifted man is, paradoxically, a gift that he can mistrust. Freud, then, had good sanction for mistrusting his, since his whole training in the school of Brücke was to avoid the kind of speculation he was prone to make. Indeed, it was just this tendency in himself that probably attracted him to that utterly speculative character, Wilhelm Fliess, who was so busy working out a system of biological time on the basis of the menstrual cycle, and whose attraction to Freud, and Freud's to him, was so obviously founded on their common tendency to intellectual guesswork. But since Freud distrusted this tendency until it could be put on a scientific footing, and Fliess distrusted his own not at all, it is interesting that the relation between them broke down—as was to happen later with the equally speculative Jung. Although Freud was a "son" to Fliess and a "father" to Jung, one can see that, despite the enormous difference between Fliess and Jung, Freud had to assert in both cases not merely the originality but the felt reality of one's hypotheses. In both cases, however, we see that Freud is inherently not the plodder he has been trained to be; that he is not a man who will always be abashed by an older and more authoritative type like Fliess; that the man who conceived psychoanalysis, who reached into the unconscious, who generalized so confidently from his own dreams and Jewish jokes, was the same man who, in this earlier period, was so excited by the possibilities of cocaine that he tried it on his own fiancée; who caught fire on seeing a particular case of hysteria; who later was to insist that Moses was an Egyptian and that there is a death wish. Obviously this man had the bold reach, the speculative power, the gift of forming radical and breathtakingly fundamental hypotheses to an extraordinary degree. But how typical it was of him, too, to say in a letter, when he was preparing himself to write *Totem and Taboo*: "I am reading thick books without being really interested in them since I already know the results; my instinct tells me that. But they have to slither their way through all the material on the subject. In that process one's insight gets clouded, there are many things that don't fit and yet mustn't be forced." We can

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see that he was reading these books not for the kind of external proof of his theories, based on someone's research, which in the case of *Totem and Taboo* would have been more formal than real; he was reading in order to make sure that he was not flying in the face of the facts and, I suspect, in order to see whether anyone had thought along this *subject* before. In that case, we can be sure, he would have checked. He was original, not irresponsible.

This is the essential Freud of the portrait—the speculative, the experimenter, the plunger, but all of whom add up to the highest scientific rectitude. It is the adventurousness in Freud that explains his break with his old teacher Breuer, with whom he had written the cardinal first book in psychoanalysis, *Studies in Hysteria.* But Breuer was frightened of "sexual studies" and withdrew. On the other hand, with a younger man like Jung, we can see that the break occurs precisely because Freud is wary of what he called in Jung the "mystical" element. Now what is the difference, someone might well demand, between Freud and Jung, since they are both theorists in a highly speculative field and each may be equally right? The difference lies in the extent to which things are real to one. Freud said, my theories are *true*; Jung, my theories are *possible.*

This is not the place for a discussion of Freud and Jung, except as their early association and later quarrel affected the founder of psychoanalysis. But I will say that even someone who is far more sympathetic to the religious imagination than Freud is, can hardly help a feeling of revulsion when he compares Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* with Freud's *The Future of an Illusion.* Freud's book, though limited, sounds as if he is talking about something he believes; while Jung's, "sincere," far more supple and sympathetic to the modern yearning for a faith, for any faith!, has about it the unmistakable suggestion: try it, it may be good for you. One rejects an *illusion*; the other offers us a *search*—for an illusion? The difference between these two books is that Freud thinks like a scientist, and is concerned with what he knows; Jung thinks "psychologically": *i.e.,* he is concerned with what man *needs*; Freud is concerned with what he sees as *truth.*

It is this passion for the truth, with its consonant sense of the whole, of the sharp edges of truth, which prepares you for whatever surprises in the shape of tigers and jaguars may spring out at you

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from the underbrush of the human soul, that makes Freud a hero. Jones emphasizes this feeling for the truth as the greatest single mark of Freud's mind, and I must confess, as someone who is not a Freudian, that whatever the obscurities and unprovabilities of Freudian doctrine, one gets an overwhelming sense in Freud's own work that he is a man who seeks truth. In Jones's psychoanalytic terms, this brings with it an instinct for the truth; I should rather call it an individual gift for the truth, a mark of spiritual character. What a man sees, that is what he is; but he has really to *see* it, as Cézanne saw the apple, and as so many highly theoretical Americans do not see the thing they tell us they are writing about. The more a man really sees, the more absurd and reckless he will seem to those who can see only what the intellectual fashion gets them to see. Freud's gift of truth, I have been saying, is not nullified by the highly speculative character of Freud's mind. Indeed, the two go together: the condition being what I do not find in Jung: the persuasion that these things are unutterably real to the man himself.

Such a mind walks on the thin edge of an abyss. On one side of you is not only all that is unknown, and perhaps unknowable, indescribable, frighteningly obscure and vaguely obscene—but, for a man so religiously trained in science as Freud was, and for whom science was, indeed, a religion, there is the danger of seeming to fly off beyond the sanctioned limits of science. And this danger Freud incurred, as he incurs it still. One leading German psychiatrist stormed at a scientific meeting, when psychoanalysis was brought up, that it was a subject "for the police." At the Academy of Medicine in New York, Freud was denounced as a typical "Viennese libertine." Freud, the most laborious sublimate of men, the man whom his lifelong associate Jones calls "quite peculiarly monogamous," was identified with the Vienna of *La Ronde*. (On the one hand his findings were scoffed at because so many of his first patients were repressed Jewish ladies; on the other hand he was denounced as an example of Viennese immorality.) The German neurologists were so entirely united against him that at one meeting, when Sadger read a study of the influence of his mother in C. F. Meyer's life, a Dr. Braatz cried out that German ideals were at stake and that something drastic should be done to protect them. (It was done; several of Freud's sisters died in Auschwitz.) Freud had hoped that Jung's important

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place in the early psychoanalytic movement would save it from being thought of as a "Jewish national movement." But Jung withdrew. And similarly, though Jones does not label the point, one can see from his account of Freud's struggle for a hearing, that some of the most violent attacks on him came from Jewish doctors. One could wish, however, that the well-known Freudian tactic of showing up every opponent and critic as badly in need of treatment were not so marked even in someone so humanly impressive as Dr. Jones. The opponent Oppenheim has to be labelled a neurotic, and "furthermore, his wife was a bad case of hysteria." Another opponent "was a curious man, a doubtful personality with a shady past." Freud's old teacher, Meynert, who had turned unfriendly, is in his turn revealed as a sick man. The heretics in the Freud circle—Adler, Jung, Stekel, Rank, and how many others—are all exposed, more or less regretfully, but with unmistakable certainty. "Nor did it surprise Freud that the so-called arguments brought forward by his opponents were identical with his patients' defenses and could show the same lack of insight and even of logic. All this was therefore in the natural order of things and could neither shake Freud's convictions nor disturb him personally."

So, despite the violent attacks, he persisted (and he never replied; only the disciples do). Why did he persist? Because he believed it. Had psychoanalysis been entirely a subject susceptible to proof, like Newton's or Pasteur's, the early hypothesis might have been confirmed and the discoverer's continuing belief in it would have seemed less remarkable than it does. Nevertheless, all discoveries, all works of art, begin in this gift of conviction, long before experimental confirmation or even realization is possible. And the test of it is always the same: a piece of reality that no one else sees is real to someone, and he makes us see it. In the same way, the original insight is either so real that you can convincingly work it out, or it is no insight at all. The brilliant but marginal thinkers, from Fliess to Rank, end up as episodes in someone else's life. The give-away is always in Jung's suggestion that God may not exist, but that He is good for you.

In Freud's kind of conviction lies the principle of the hero; it is this that gives him his character. Seen from the outside, a life like

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Freud's, ending as it did not merely in the loss of so many talented disciples, but in his suffering as an old man at the hands of the Nazis, in the loss of his library, in the cancer of the throat that so agonizingly killed him, represents, as we feel, a remarkable ordeal. And the tendency of most Americans who are sympathetic to psychoanalysis is probably to feel, as David Riesman complains in *Individualism Reconsidered,* that Freud believed in arduousness, that he could see anything good only as the reward of extreme effort. From a social point of view, when we consider the venomous, the unbelievable hostility against him in anti-Semitic Vienna, and the contrast with the sloppiness which was a Viennese joke and self-indulgence and boast, Freud's grim laboriousness must have aroused particular dislike and hostility. (It was *after* seeing patients all day and after writing up his notes and correspondence that he would sit down, after nine in the evening, to his own books. This routine went on day after day, interrupted only by a walk and one evening a week playing cards with his cronies. Only when he was sixty-five, Jones tells us, did he allow himself a cup of coffee at five o'clock. He rarely drank even wine.) But what both the corrupt society of Vienna, and Americans who think that any extreme kind of moral exertion is somehow unhealthy—what both miss is the extraordinary hold that conviction of the truth has upon such a man as Freud, dominating his life, holding him to his desk late into the night, forcing him at the end, when he was dying of cancer in London, still to see patients. And need it be noted that this was probably not a merciful gesture, that Freud was not so much a healer as a scientist, that his patients were the one laboratory in which this man could confirm and advance his theories? The hero is a hero because he has an heroic destiny, and the very mark of such a destiny is that no one chooses it; it chooses the man it shall be embodied in. The destiny is a cause, an essential idea behind the perplexing surface of things. Just as it chooses the hero, its oracle, its voice to the world, so in this knitting together of hero and cause lies the essence of a suffering that he cannot reject, any more than he could, anticipating the cost ahead, not have chosen it. But truth, choosing him, pledged him to endure what had to be. And it is in this sense of the inescapability of the truth that the characteristic devotion of the hero is found.

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Stanley Edgar Hyman

FREUD AND THE CLIMATE OF TRAGEDY

Psychoanalysis and tragedy are not easy matters to discuss from a mere reading knowledge, with no experience either behind the footlights or on the couch. Yet if we take tragedy not as a subdivision of drama but as a larger complex of attitudes and actions found in many literary forms, and psychoanalysis as a cultural rather than a medical phenomenon, specialists have written little enough to our purpose, and the overlap between the two areas has been so inadequately discussed that a critic of literature may perhaps be pardoned for stepping in brashly where theater people and analysts hesitate to tread.

Tragedy as we know it had its first and greatest flowering in fifth century Athens, in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and its fullest theoretical formulation in the *Poetics* of Aristotle. The forms of Attic tragedy, as Aristotle half knew from tradition, derived from the sacrificial rites of Dionysus, in which the god in bull or goat form was annually slain, dismembered and resurrected. The plots of Attic tragedy came principally from Homer, and the bloody stories of incest and murder fit the ritual forms so well because the Homeric tales themselves, as Rhys Carpenter has shown most fully in *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics,* derive from similar rites far from Mount Olympus. Out of the *agon* or dramatic conflict between the god in human form and his antagonists, evolved the ethical concepts of *hamartia* or shortcoming, the tragic flaw, and of *hybris* or pride, the imperfect insight into man's true stature in relation to destiny and the gods. These defects motivated the action, and for the spectators, in Aristotle's formulation, the tragic action aroused pity and terror and symbolically purged them through catharsis. The moral ingredients of tragedy are thus: the flawed protagonist swollen with pride; *peripeteia,* the sudden pitiable and terrifying change in his fortunes; and a cathartic climax that Herbert Weisinger in *Tragedy and the Paradox of the*

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Fortunate Fall, borrowing the phrase from Isaiah, has called the "small moment," that desperate awaiting of the fateful outcome when all seems in doubt.

Buried in the Old Testament there are tragic dramas, particularly the very Greek story of Saul and his "bloody house" in the books of Samuel, but the later priestly theology has imposed its institutional conception of the sacrificial animal without blemish on the earlier *hybris* stories, and revised such obvious tragedies as Jonah and Job, the former into a curious redemptive comedy that concludes on the parable of the gourd, the latter with an ending that begs all its questions and blandly returns all Job's earthly property twofold. On the basis of a theology where the only sins are disobeying God or worshiping rival gods, and the consequences of those are never in doubt, no agonistic form is possible, and the Judaic tradition has produced nothing like a tragic or dramatic literature.

Building on this tradition, Christianity too seems incompatible with a tragic literature, as Weisinger among others has shown. The great Christian drama of the Passion cannot be tragic because the perfection of Jesus eliminates *hybris* or any shortcoming, neither pity nor terror in Aristotle's sense is possible because of our inability to identify our own flawed human nature with the image of perfect goodness suffering absolute injustice, and the final victory is always certain. Drama with a human protagonist, insofar as it is Christian, cannot be tragic, since the issue has been settled once and for all by the victory of Jesus in His Incarnation, and His Atonement makes all subsequent private atonement unnecessary for the Christian, who needs only some combination of Faith and Grace to participate in the antecedent act. Dante properly recognized this in identifying his great poetic drama as a divine comedy. Where tragic possibility is reintroduced in Christian history it is invariably repudiated as heresy, the Manichaean belief that the issue has not yet been finally settled, denying Incarnation its victory, or the Pelagian repudiation of Original Sin, obviating divine Atonement.

Nor have the great Oriental faiths produced anything we could properly call tragedy. Since their common sacrificial figure, as William Empson has pointed out in *Some Versions of Pastoral,* is not the Western Dying God, typified by Jesus on the Cross, but an antithetical image of The Sincere Man at One with Nature, typified

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by the Buddha under the Bo tree, no Passion is possible, and there can be neither struggle nor victory. Lacking our characteristic Western philosophy of change, the great Oriental faiths seem to lock man in a permanent dualism, which does not become resolved in time, but has always been transcended in a higher unity pre-existent in the blinding moment of eternity.

I would submit that the great tragic literature of the modern world has escaped divine comedy by being only nominally Christian, and in fact deeply heretic at key points. Shakespeare may be Christian in *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest,* but *Lear* and *Macbeth, Othello* and *Hamlet,* are Christian only in their insistence on the radical imperfectibility of man. They exist in a Manichaean and Pelagian universe where the Incarnation has never happened and the Atonement consequently did not come off. In this universe proud man is locked in mortal struggle with the inner forces of evil, and must win through to some private redemption and true-seeing by means of his own suffering, with no otherworldly allies. The great tragic novels like *Karamazov* and *Moby-Dick* are similarly Manichaean and Pelagian, with Jesus appearing in person in the first to hear from the Grand Inquisitor the failure of his Incarnation, and Ahab in the second striking through the mask of the Christian Atonement, and finding his own sacrificial atonement, a Pelagian man-god, in the consubstantial mystery of immolation with the great whale.

The rise of rationalism, whether in its characteristic eighteenth-century form as mechanical determinism or its characteristic nineteenth-century form as optimistic perfectibility, killed the tragic possibility that had coexisted with Christianity as pagan survival and Christian heresy. Francis Fergusson has defined the tragic rhythm of action in *The Idea of a Theater* as the movement from "Purpose" through "Passion" to "Perception" (acknowledging his debt to Kenneth Burke's *"poiema," "pathema," "mathema"*). Taking, as Aristotle did, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* as the archetypal tragedy, Fergusson has discussed later dramatic literature as the hypertrophy of one or another phase of the larger cycle. In his terms, the rationalist world of mechanical determinism would permit no Purpose because we can have no free will or choice, no Passion because suffering becomes meaningless where we "understand" all and forgive all, and no Perception because no increase of self-knowledge could come

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from the discovery that everything has been externally caused. In the Victorian world of optimistic perfectibility, to return to our earlier terms, *hybris* can be dissipated by a bracing daily cold bath, *peripeteia* waits only on improvements in the social machinery, and what small moment of terror, doubt or despair could survive the splendid teleological faith that the Heavenly City is at this moment having its building plots laid out on earth?

It is my belief that the writings of Sigmund Freud once again make a tragic view possible for the modern mind. Insofar as psychoanalysis is a branch of clinical psychology aimed at therapy, it is optimistic and meliorative (although Freud, in such statements as "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," was far more pessimistic about the difficulties and ultimate limits of cure in biological "rock-bottom" than the majority of his followers). Insofar as it is a philosophic view of man and a body of speculative insights that can be turned on every area of culture (that is, what Freud called "applied" psychoanalysis), it is gloomy, stoic, and essentially tragic. Its basic recognition is the radical imperfectibility of man, a concept it derives not from the Christian Fall, but from the Darwinian Descent. Freudian man is an imperfectible animal, and, as the biological punishment for having risen in the scale beyond the micro-organism, a dying animal. The first protoplasm "had death within easy reach," Freud observes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. For Freud, the aim of human existence is the reclamation of some cropland of ego from the "Zuyder Zee" of id, and the limited victory in this bitter struggle is achieved primarily through the traditional philosophic means of self-knowledge. Man's animal nature is to be controlled and channeled in the least harmful direction possible, not changed or abolished, and cure lies not in extirpating animality but in facing it and living with it.

Human life "is hard to endure," Freud says in *The Future of an Illusion,* but we must learn "to endure with resignation." "If you would endure life," he recommends in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," "be prepared for death." In such essays as "An Apology of *Raymond Sebond*" and "That to Philosophie, is to Learn How to Die," Montaigne confronted death as nobly and resolutely as Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo,* but without Socrates' eloquent faith in individual resurrection and the afterlife. Since many of us are

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not Socratics but skeptics, and our problem to adjust not to the dying animal that will be sloughed off to free some eternal spirit, but to the dying animal that becomes putrid meat and nothing else, we might do well to eschew the easy consolations of religion and turn to whatever grimmer satisfactions exist in Freud's stubbornly materialist view. Here we can find not only an Original Sin—the Freudian myth of the expulsion from the Eden of the womb added to the Darwinian myth of the origin of death—in which the modern mind can believe, but some terrestrial hopes for redemption and the good life.

In terms of Greek tragedy, the Oedipus complex is another phrasing of *hybris* (of King Oedipus' own *hybris,* in fact), the child's swollen pride that he is a fitter mate for his mother than the tall stranger. Libido, the blind energy of sexual impulses, is equivalent to the ancient Greek "wild Ate," the daughter of Zeus and Strife, the wrath or madness that seizes the hero and moves him to senseless violence, destruction, or self-destruction. Sublimation is the small moment, the reintroduction of possibility, the birth of art and all human culture out of filth. Sublimation allows St. Francis to create a life of goodness out of an impulse to bestiality, or Bach to compose for an organ that is not the one with which psychoanalysis is preoccupied. Even the curative procedure of analysis itself, the transference, is a scapegoat mechanism, and Freud in his whole life and work is a sacrificial figure, almost a Dying God, even without the benefit of such probably apocryphal anecdotes as the one of Freud dashing out of his office shouting, "Why must I listen to such swinishness!"

If the human condition is ultimately animal, even swinish, man is nevertheless capable of moral action and sometimes of a life of sacrificial good, as Freud himself was. In terms of Ruth Benedict's somewhat oversimple dichotomy between shame cultures and guilt cultures, the Freudian neuroses are our own guilty or introjected equivalents for the public shame of wrongdoing in Attic tragedy, and they motivate an internal symbolic action like the redemptive ritual on the stage. For Freud, the choice is a newer dialectic statement of the old dualism, truly "beyond the pleasure principle": destroy others or turn the destruction inward. The ancient Zoroastrian divinities Ormuzd and Ahriman that Mani brought into Christianity are still

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locked in mortal combat in Freud's "exquisitely dualistic conception of the instinctive life," now called Eros the life instinct and Thanatos the death instinct. "The death instinct turns into the destructive instinct" when it is directed outward to the external world, Freud writes in "Why War?," and he concludes the grandest of his philosophic works, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* with the extremely moderate hope:

> Men have brought their powers of subduing the forces of nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man. They know this—hence arises a great part of their current unrest, their dejection, their mood of apprehension. And now it may be expected that the other of the two "heavenly forces," eternal Eros, will put forth his strength so as to maintain himself alongside of his equally immortal adversary.

In essence, this prophetic statement, written as long ago as 1929, asks no more than the old horse player's reasonable prayer, "Lord, let me break even, I need the money."

If Freud produced a climate of opinion in which tragedy could again flourish, an important group of his followers in this country, the neo-Freudians or "revisionists," have done their best to dispel it as quickly as possible. In half a century of existence, psychoanalysis has raced through the whole religious cycle from revolutionary prophetic truth to smug Sunday sermon, and almost as soon as Freud's philosophy began to have an effect on our culture, it was hushed up and denied in his name. The revisionists, principally the late Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and the late Harry Stack Sullivan, along with a number of others of similar views, have put Freudian psychoanalysis into what Emerson called the "optative mood."

All began by publishing independently, but Horney and Fromm had had some contact in Berlin, where they had been influenced in varying degrees by Wilhelm Reich's "Freudo-Marxist" movement. Horney, who has written most extensively about the causes of her defection, has explained that she could not swallow either the views of feminine psychology Freud published in the *New Introductory Lectures* in 1933, or the death instinct, the former as a woman but the latter as a citizen. "Such an assumption," she writes of the death

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instinct in *New Ways in Psychoanalysis,* "paralyzes any effort to search in the specific cultural conditions for reasons which make for destructiveness. It must also paralyze efforts to change anything in these conditions. If man is inherently destructive and consequently unhappy, why strive for a better future?" In his more articulate strivings, befitting a social psychologist, Fromm found the gloomy fixities of biological instincts equally incompatible with hopes of improving the human condition by first making over society. Sullivan, from a very different background in clinical psychiatry, primarily with psychotics, came to similar conclusions. All three have influenced one another, first by their publications, later through direct discussion and a kind of uneasy collaboration. Their views and approaches, however, remain different enough so that one can choose to be a Horneyite, a Frommian, or a Sullivanite, and in some cases, like that of Clara Thompson, one can make several of these choices in succession.

The leading neo-Freudians, as well as their shifting followers, appear to be entirely sincere and dedicated psychoanalysts and psychiatrists, convinced by developments in the social sciences or their own clinical experience that Freud was culture-bound, masculine-biased, cancer-morbid, or for some reason blind to what they can see. The result of their revisions has nevertheless, in my opinion, been not to improve or modernize psychoanalysis, but to abandon its key insights both as a science and as a philosophy. Their effect has been to repress whatever distasteful or tragic truths Freud dug out of his own unconscious or his patients', and to convert the familiar device of resistance into revisionist theory.

Freud always believed that "prudish America" would welcome his theories and water them down with equal enthusiasm, and his expectation has not been disappointed. The passion of Americans for constant reassurance that they live in the Garden of Eden (which Horney characteristically refers to as "the greater freedom from dogmatic beliefs which I found in this country") was in evidence as far back as 1912, when Jung wrote Freud from America that he was having great success in overcoming resistance to psychoanalysis by playing down sexuality, and Freud wrote back that he need not boast, since "the more he sacrificed of the hard-won truths of psychoanalysis, the less resistance he would encounter." Even predicting this American bowdlerization, however, Freud could hardly have

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imagined the extent to which it would be done in his name, in books worshipfully acknowledging his teaching or fulsomely dedicated to his memory. Paradoxically, with the aim of making psychoanalysis more scientific, the neo-Freudians have made it less so: where Freud was descriptive, they are hortatory; where he was the humble therapist, they are faith-healers, inspirational preachers, be-glad-you're-neurotic Pollyannas.

The question of whether in fact Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan are Freudians or psychoanalysts at all seems to me of relatively minor importance, and is probably impossible to answer authoritatively anyway. In *The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* in 1914, Freud reserved the right, as its founder, to say what was and what was not psychoanalysis, but his various statements of the criteria involved shift disconcertingly. In the *History,* he calls the theory of "repression" in the unconscious the pillar on which the edifice rests, "really the most essential part of it," along with the empiric facts of "transference" and "resistance." "Every investigation which recognizes these two facts and makes them the starting-point of its work may call itself psychoanalysis," he writes, "even if it leads to other results than my own." Later in the book he describes the dream as "the shibboleth of psychoanalysis," and a few pages later declares that Jung's approach "no longer has the slightest claim to call itself psychoanalysis," apparently because it discards the sexual nature of the libido and the reality of the Oedipus complex. In other works, Freud makes the infantile sexual etiology of the neuroses the test of psychoanalysis, or remarks "a psychoanalytic, that is, genetic explanation."

If any investigation starting from the mechanisms of the unconscious may call itself psychoanalysis, the theories of Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan are probably psychoanalytic. They certainly recognize the existence of resistance and repression, and Horney even calls the concept of resistance "of paramount value for therapy." On the genesis of the neuroses from infantile sexuality, they are considerably less orthodox, since they recognize early sex frustrations as causative in some cases but insist that factors like "anxiety" or "the current life-situation" are more relevant. They use the term "transference," but mean not a repetition of an infantile attachment, Freud's "cure through love," but, with Sullivan, a significant new sort of inter-

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personal relation, the first break in the patient's chain of "parataxic" distortions; or, with Horney, simply that human relationship of the patient's easiest to study, control, and explain to him. "As for the transference, it is altogether a curse," Freud wrote in a bleak letter to Pfister in 1910; it never occurred to him that with a little Draconian redefinition he would have no problem.

If we take Freud's sexual concepts, so unattractive to Jung's American contacts in 1912, as basic, there is no likelihood of calling Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan Freudian psychoanalysts. I would take these basic concepts to be: *libido,* the volcanic sexual instinct; *id,* the caged beast of the unconscious ("a cauldron of seething excitement," Freud called it in a different metaphor); and the *Oedipus complex,* the destructive rivalry with one parent and attachment to the other. In varying degrees, the revisionists have denied all three or modified them out of recognition. For Horney, the libido concept is harmful nonsense suggesting discouraging limitations to therapy; the id is a "debatable doctrine" (what she keeps of Freud she calls "findings," what she rejects, "doctrines"); and the Oedipus complex does not exist in healthy adults, but is produced accidentally in neurotics, as Adler had suggested earlier, by parental sex-stimulation or parent-fostered anxiety. For Fromm, as for Jung, the sexual libido is simply an assumption "one does not share"; what Freud called id is largely eradicable drives produced by the culture; and the Oedipus complex is, Fromm agrees, the central phenomenon of psychology and the nucleus of all neuroses, but it is not a nasty sexual attraction to one parent and a murderous rivalry with the other, but merely a normal and healthy struggle against parental authority in the quest for freedom and independence. For Sullivan, sexual difficulties tend to be symptoms rather than causes, so that libido and id simply do not exist, and a variety of interesting interpersonal attachments take the place of the Oedipus complex.

The neo-Freudians insist on the importance of sociology and anthropology for knowledge of the ways in which the culture determines personality and character, or at least limits their possibilities. A good deal of their sociology, however, seems to be about as profound as Fromm's ingenious formulation "the most backward class, the lower middle class," and their anthropology is typified by Thompson's statement that Benedict has shown in the Kwakiutl or the Dobu

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"a whole society of psychically crippled and unproductive people," and that certain primitive cultures seem to be "predominantly destructive of man's best interests." If Fromm has read more modern anthropology than Freud, he has apparently been less affected by it, and cultural relativism has not laid a glove on him. In *The Sane Society,* Fromm equates all ethics with "Greco-Judaeo-Christian" ethics, a moral absolute, and remarks casually, "natural ethics, the Decalogue," with the engaging footnote: "Minus the first commandment, which bears on man's destiny and not on ethics."

The opportunity, vastly greater than Freud's, that the neo-Freudians have for acquiring some accurate information about the nature of man in society seems to have resulted only in cheerier illusions. Malinowski in *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* would appear to have confirmed the universality of the Oedipus complex by finding among his matriarchal Trobrianders an equivalent—the male child's rivalry with the culture's father-surrogate, the mother's brother. The neo-Freudians have taken it instead to show that, in Horney's words, "the generation of such a complex depends on a whole set of factors operating in family life"; in other words, that all such unwholesome manifestations are socially produced and could be eliminated by social change. If Freud generalized a universal human psyche from an early practice consisting largely of neurotic Jewish middle-class women in turn-of-the-century Vienna, a reading of *The Golden Bough,* and his own self-analysis, all we can say is that the ingredients of that curious stew simmered down to more wisdom than all the resources of American industriousness have brought the neo-Freudians. Socrates sitting on a stone in the market place still knows more about the world than Alexander conquering it.

Ultimately, the differences of Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan with Freud reduce themselves to a contrasting view of human nature, to philosophic disagreement. The revisionists see man as fundamentally good, innocent, and unfallen; thus they inevitably have a different conception of human drives, relationships, and the aims of therapy. In Horney's view of the child, frustration, sibling rivalry, the Oedipus complex, and similar factors are not ultimately determining; the important matters are "such parental attitudes as having real interest in a child, real respect for it, giving it real warmth," and "such qualities as reliability and sincerity." As for adults:

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It is so much easier for a woman to think that she is nasty to her husband because, unfortunately, she was born without a penis and envies him for having one than to think, for instance, that she has developed an attitude of righteousness and infallibility which makes it impossible to tolerate any questioning or disagreement. It is so much easier for a patient to think that nature has given her an unfair deal than to realize that she actually makes excessive demands on the environment and is furious whenever they are not complied with.

Horney cannot countenance the Freudian view because it would allow "no liking or disliking of people, no sympathy, no generosity, no feeling of justice, no devotion to a cause, which is not in the last analysis essentially determined by libidinal or destructive drives."

The aim of therapy is not Freud's modest relief from neurotic difficulties, but "true happiness," to which most patients, she says, had never even dared aspire. "The enjoyment of happiness is a faculty to be acquired from within," she adds, and the end of analysis for the patient is "to give him the courage to be himself," or in another formulation, "by rendering a person free from inner bondages make him free for the development of his best potentialities." Horney never doubts that when the patient has the courage to be himself it will be a good self, or that he has best potentialities to develop, because she shares Rousseau's faith that "the spontaneous individual self" is born free and good but is everywhere in environmental chains. Beneath everything there is some sort of ultimate, absolute "genuineness" in the personality, and it is this that gives her her faith, against Freud's "disbelief in human goodness and human growth," that "man has the capacity as well as the desires to develop his potentialities and become a decent human being."

Fromm charges that Freud may have been inspired in his theorizing by "an unsolved problem in the relationship to his own mother," but nothing in Fromm's background has given him cause to doubt "the unconditioned love of the mother for her children *because they are her children.*" The slogan of his "humanistic psychoanalysis" is "productive love," which enriches both parties and surpasseth understanding. Fromm's first book, *Escape from Freedom,* carries as its epigraph the unlovely Talmudic saying "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" His second book, inevitably entitled *Man for Himself,* explains how he got his key term ("Genuine love

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is rooted in productiveness and may properly be called, therefore, 'productive love' "). Since only a person genuinely capable of loving himself is capable of loving others, self-interest is a social good, as it was for Bernard Mandeville and Adam Smith. Fromm writes:

> The failure of modern culture lies not in its principles of individualism, not in the idea that moral virtue is the same as the pursuit of self-interest, but in the deterioration of the meaning of self-interest; not in the fact that people are *too much concerned with their self-interest,* but that they are *not concerned enough with the interest of their real self; not in the fact that they are too selfish, but that they do not love themselves.*

Even the superego in *The Sane Society* is loving and productive, "a voice which tells us to do our duty, and a voice which tells us to love and to forgive—others as well as ourselves."

The aim of therapy is naturally to free this true self for its true productive loving self-interest. "Mental health is characterized by the ability to love and to create," he writes, and "creation" as an ideal is defined rather broadly: "an ever-increasing number of people paint, do gardening, build their own boats or houses, indulge in any number of 'do it yourself' activities." As for the nature of man, "we look upon human nature as essentially historically conditioned," and Freud's Manichaean dualism becomes the Christian certainty of victory for God's Party: "the forward-going life instinct is stronger and increases in relative strength the more it grows." We know that our redeemers live, even if they are only people in the French Communities of Work with "a resilient spirit of good will," "people who have said 'yes' to life"; not yet the truly "awakened ones" like "Ikhnaton, Moses, Kung Fu-tse, Lao-tse, Buddha, Jesaja, Socrates, Jesus."

Sullivan's underlying philosophy seems essentially similar, although its expression is a good deal more rugged and considerably less inspirational. In *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry,* Sullivan defines love as a "state of affectional rapport," which has "great adaptive possibilities" and produces "a great increase in the consensual validation of symbols." In *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry,* he redefines it in even clammier terms:

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Intimacy is that type of situation involving two people which permits validations of all components of personal worth. Validation of personal worth requires a type of relationship which I call collaboration, by which I mean clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in the pursuit of increasingly identical —that is, more and more nearly mutual—satisfactions, and the maintenance of increasingly similar security operations.

For Sullivan, perhaps because so much of his clinical experience was with psychotics rather than neurotics, the aim of therapy is less ambitious: better interpersonal relations, better communication, and a positive direction toward goals of collaboration and of mutual satisfaction and security. He is less impressed by the miraculous "unique individual self" that will flower than Horney and Fromm, and his vision of the nature of man is not so much Rousseau's uncorrupted innocent as a neutral network of interpersonal relations, as capable of good, bad, or indifferent functioning as a telephone switchboard. How far it is from a tragic vision we can see in such comments as: "When difficulties in the sex life are presented by a patient as his reason for needing psychiatric help . . . the patient's difficulty in living is best manifested by his very choice of this as his peculiar problem."

Other neo-Freudians show similar optimism. Franz Alexander, the head of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute, sponsors a shorter and more directed therapy, in line with his idea that the therapist is not dealing with the stubborn sexual libido, but with three basic human tendencies he has named: to receive or take, to retain, and to give or eliminate. Clara Thompson believes with Fromm in "creative productive love," as a consequence of which she sees the aim of therapy as "calm self-possession," the patient "free to develop his powers." Like Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan, she simply cannot believe in the existence of evil. Surely a child "in a perfectly benign environment" would not show "serious destructiveness," and any child warped by bad parents can be readily redeemed "if a teacher, a Boy Scout leader or some other hero of childhood presents a consistently different attitude." Bruno Bettelheim, the principal of the Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago, calls on psychoanalysis to emphasize "positive human emotions and motivations," and to interpret behavior in terms of "inner freedom and human auton-

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omy" and "man's inherent dignity." Beyond these, there are Fay B. Karpf's "Dynamic Relationship Therapy," and what Patrick Mullahy, a Sullivanite trained in philosophy, describes as "the sense of adequacy, competence, and power which comes from self-respect and respect for others—a rational feeling of power." An inch or two further, and we are lying down in green pastures beside Norman Vincent Peale.

The question is not what degree of therapeutic success these doctrines give, since the evidence suggests that any internally consistent system of interpretation accepted by the patient, from shamanism to the miraculous grottos of Zurich, can cure,[1] but what happens to literature in a culture that has shaped them and is in turn somewhat shaped by them. If tragedy requires Freud's stoic winning through to the perception of harsh truth, and all the influence of our psychology goes directly against it, then perhaps we should be content with comedy or even farce. Unfortunately, the neo-Freudian doctrines could as readily be shown, I think, to be uncongenial to art of any sort. Comedy and farce, like dreams, are the disguised fulfillment of repressed wishes. As the dream is organized in reaction to the commanding injunctions of the superego, so the comic arts get their structuring from a similar ethical conflict, the opposition of accepted what-ought-to-be to what-is. In the cultural determinism of the interpersonalists, where whatever is is no individual's fault, comedy is as impossible as tragedy.

Lionel Trilling, who has been uniquely distinguished among modern literary critics by his defense of Freudian orthodoxy against bowdlerization and revision,[2] has remarked that one of the greatest contributions of psychoanalysis to literature is its image of the mind

1 In *The New Statesman and Nation* for January 7, 1956, Dr. H. J. Eysenck of the University of London printed some disconcerting figures on psychoanalytic cure, based on a review of the published material. Of neurotic patients treated by means of any kind of psychotherapy, approximately two out of three recover. Of neurotics who receive no therapy whatsoever, approximately two out of three recover. In other words, two out of three is apparently the percentage of spontaneous recovery. Since then, none of the letters in *The New Statesman* taking issue with Dr. Eysenck's conclusions has challenged these figures.

2 Since this was written, Trilling has published his 1955 Freud Anniversary Lecture, *Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture,* with its bold and brilliant vision of Freud's biological limitation as a sanctuary against the omnipotent tyranny of culture.

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as a kind of poetry-making machine, so that it constitutes almost a science of tropes. Insofar as literary or artistic form and dream form are the products of similar devices, and operations analogous to condensation, displacement, and the rest shape the poem, Freud has given us one of the great critical tools for literary analysis. Where the revisionists deny genetic and dynamic factors and insist on "the current life situation," here as everywhere they repudiate insight and hobble art. Burke has written in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* that the poem consists of three aspects: dream, prayer, and chart. The neo-Freudian poem has for its dream, The validation of all components of personal worth; for its prayer, Help me to stop making excessive demands on the environment; for its chart, To thine own self-interest be true.

Perhaps a good measure of the fault lies in our country itself. In a paper, "Freud in America: Some Observations," read at the 1954 meeting of the American Psychological Association, Joseph Adelson discussed the resistance to Freud in terms of the deeply entrenched American idea of "the indefinite perfectibility of man" that Tocqueville noted as early as 1835. Adelson writes:

> American feeling is animated by a zest for freedom; it cries out against constraint. While men may vary in what they achieve, their destinies are open and infinite. We may fall into error or failure, yet we do so, not because of an inner taint, but through circumstance; and circumstance, the American feels, can be rectified. Original sin, even in its most secular versions, has not attracted our thought. In changing the external, in modifying situations, men, we feel, can make and re-make themselves. It is in the idea of man's perfectibility and in the vision of a tractable world that Americans find their way to life's meaning. Throughout its history American feeling has struggled against the concept of limitation and has been held by the attitudes of hope and optimism.

Adelson summarizes Freud's contrary vision of human life, and adds:

> The American mood is substantially different. We experiment enthusiastically, trying this and that, all of our efforts informed by a vigorous faith in the endless plasticity of the human organism. It is my impression that we tend to disregard the dark and archaic components of the personality; at the very least we deprive them, rhetorically, of their vigor. Think of how Freud expressed the intensity of

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the instincts or of the superego—"oceanic," "surging," "raging." American psychology uses much blander adjectives. We tend to emphasize the ego's resources, its ability, somehow, to drive its way to health. In fact, the systems of Rogers, Horney, and Sullivan have in common the explicit assumption that the organism autonomously moves forward to growth. We incline to see the therapeutic task, then, as involving the strengthening of ego capacities. A friend of mine puts it this way: "We don't try to kill the weeds; we feed the clover and hope that *it* will kill the weeds."

If Freud, *in conjunction with* other intellectual and social forces, succeeded in denting this Emersonian optimism in the period between the two World Wars, many of his most articulate followers have since labored to hammer it back into shape. No one can say that any given work of art is affected by any given body of ideas, but we must assume in general that ideas have consequences. It is instructive to note how many important contemporary writers have followed their earlier tragic work with later mellowings. Hemingway is a classic example. Where *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms,* if not masterpieces, are authentically tragic, moving from Purpose through Passion to Perception, such later novels as *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Across the River and into the Trees* are merely bathetic, and if Robert Jordan or Colonel Cantwell commits *hybris,* the author seems no longer aware of it. Where "The Undefeated" was a truly cathartic work of art, its recent rewriting as *The Old Man and the Sea* is almost a Frommian parody ("If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"). Faulkner has moved similarly from a fiction of ritual tragedy in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August* to optimistic comedy or fairytale, as have Steinbeck, Caldwell, and so many others. Such dissimilar poets as Frost and Eliot traveled the same route from earlier bleak stoicism to such later chatty affirmations as *A Masque of Mercy* and *The Confidential Clerk,* and if on the whole our poets have been less affected by the retreat from tragic insight, it is perhaps only that, like our dramatists, not many of them were ever there to begin with.

We would all enthusiastically welcome the psychoanalytic good society, where every psyche was well and whole, and no one had impulses that could not or should not be gratified. To the extent that a good part of our literature depends on our being deeply and ir-

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remediably sick, renouncing it would be a small price to pay for general psychic health, just as Hegel was prepared to slough off art as an inferior form of communion when the stage of perfect communion was realized. Even within our limited experience at present, we can see how much our great literature depends on and is informed by the patterns of neurosis in our culture. To an unacculturated Cheyenne, King Lear would be simply an old man behaving very badly; to those gentle socialists the Mountain Arapesh, the whole disordered story of ungrateful children and rival claims to power and property would be meaningless. In real life, we are sure, Mr. and Mrs. Othello have no problem that a good marriage counselor couldn't clear up in ten minutes, and any of our clinics would give Iago some useful job around the grounds, allowing him to work off his aggressions in some socially useful fashion.

Unfortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Othello do not exist in real life but in art, where their deadly misunderstanding is essential to our own well-being, and Iago is permanently out of the therapist's clutches. The psychoanalytic good society seems no nearer of achievement now than it did in Vienna in 1900, and to many of us it seems further off. Meanwhile all the Cheyenne are acculturated and apt to behave almost as badly as Lear, given similar provocation. If the Mountain Arapesh have not yet learned the joys of private property and early toilet training from our movies, they soon will, and one day they will all wear pre-faded blue jeans and know what bites sharper than the serpent's tooth. The trouble with the revisionist Freudians is not that they would give up art for the psychoanalytic good society, but that they pretend that it is already here, that we are well when we are in fact desperately ill, and they drive out art when it is almost the only honest doctor who will tell us the truth.

If Freud showed us that human life was nasty, brutish, and short, and had always been, he was only holding the mirror up to our own faces, saying what the great philosophers and the great tragic writers have always said. If we are serious, our reaction to this bitter truth is neither to evade it with one or another anodyne, nor to kill ourselves, but to set out humbly through the great tragic rhythm of pride and fall, so curiously alike in psychoanalysis and literature. At the end of this hard road we can see faintly beckoning that self-knowledge without which, we are assured on good authority, we live as meanly as the ants.

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POEMS

THE CANDY-MAN'S ART IS THE SWEETEST ART I KNOW

The candy-man's art is the sweetest art I know,
Unless the fireworks-man can master him,
Whose dazed confections pepper the sky with a glow
Of starry sugar, coloring and cream
To make us gay with glee—but even so
The candy-man's art is the sweetest art I know

Whose riots of color, stacked on trays in the clean
Cathedral of his counter, bring in to worship
The housewife, the good husband; even the lean
Irreligious urchin proclaims that his religion
Is a wild surging of such colorful rain
As sweetens the tiger and makes fierce the pigeon;

Or holds for us those lollipops like a rainbow
Hinting of all voluptuousness, and even
That nicer nothingness one also knew
Deep at the dug, his mother humming so
He thought (who could not think) all heaven had come,
Lovely in cellophane, into his well-scrubbed room.

But, "Heaven's my gum-drop, I'll have it all in a bag,"
The child may later pipe; then, hiding in words,
A metaphysical taffy comes to swell
The pink, decaying bridgework of his hours—
No gum-drops then! Nor will he stand an ounce
Of that glib confection he crunched on once. . .

Sing *carpe diem*! the candy-man must come
Himself at last to a narrow room;

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The burly, hurling world that whirls in zones
Will hammer out tart epitaphiums
To wall up heaven, all its sweetness gone—
And no more candy under the sun!

Albert Herzing

THIS HERMIT LOOK

That squats in the middle of roads,
Or, wretchedly stretching, waiting,
That lies bare, house by house,
Where scabby yards hold frost:
What can we hope for on earth
When earth's own hope is shamed?
Though footprints pick along

Till backyard pumps are mired,
Every morning intrudes
On only more loneliness. Dear,
Take any trampled pool
We know of in vacant lots:
How winter welled with meetings
Has come to look as errant

As any ugly out
Alongside a mansion—have
We, too, hurried the gate-post?
Is it shame that sweetens
So horribly now our love?
A despair no living nears
Outlasts all our short-cuts

And tells us oh to beware
Fixed emotions in small rooms
—Unless we absolutely

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Want the feel of next month's
Never-to-be-crumpled sunlight
That snuggles in unbelievable
Dug-outs now, bedeviled.

Frederick Bock

THE SHRINE

A double highway little used in early spring
Goes to the end of the land where Washington's chandeliers
Are kept his beds and chairs his roped off relic kitchen
Spits his pans his floors are worn underneath the dead

Pilgrims' feet; outside, the not-so-visited tomb;
And over the field and fence his legendary river:
And so I walk although the day is cold for this
I eat a thin slice of bread and one remarkable

Egg perfectly shaped a perfect oriental por-
Celain sheen of white. Suddenly the lost
Ghosts of his life broke from trees and from the cold
Mud pools where he played a boy and set as a man
The sand glint of his boot, the flick of his cot on the weeds,

His wheels click in the single road.

John Logan

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Morton White

ORIGINAL SIN, NATURAL LAW, AND POLITICS*

1. *Credo and Non-credo.* Some years ago, when writing my book *Social Thought in America,* I reported on the declining reputation of American liberal thinkers like Dewey and Holmes, not realizing that I was noting a tendency that would swell into an effort to discredit totally the ideas of the most distinguished Americans of the present century. I still consider my criticism of Dewey and Holmes to be just, but the current intellectual atmosphere makes it plain that for all my reservations I have more in common with them than with most of their contemporary detractors. *Social Thought in America* is not the work of an empiricist turned transcendentalist, nor do I look back on it as the product of a temporary aberration. But recent events have brought the liberal outlook under a very different kind of attack. It should be said, therefore, that my book is in no sense to be identified with the more recent revivals of religious, conservative, and obscurantist thinking which have attempted to discredit and seriously lower the reputation of liberalism and secularism in social, political, and moral affairs.

To underline this I will consider the views of two distinguished critics of the liberal tradition: Reinhold Niebuhr, the most democratic and courageous opponent of secular liberalism on the American scene, and Walter Lippmann, who has bemoaned the disappearance of "The Public Philosophy" in a vein distinctly antithetical to the outlook of Dewey and Holmes. In criticizing Lippmann and Niebuhr I mean to align myself spiritually with Dewey and Holmes, even

* This is an abridgement of a new preface and epilogue to a paperback edition of *Social Thought in America*: *The Revolt against Formalism,* to be issued by Beacon Press.

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though I am not always prepared to defend the actual letter of their texts. I do not share Niebuhr's faith, nor do I admire his Hegelian way of dealing with contradictions; I cannot accept the historical inevitability of sin which is such an important part of his view; I deplore Lippmann's revival of the ancient and obscure theory of essences and natural law. And, in general, it seems to me a sad commentary on the thought of 1956 that two of our most popular social thinkers can produce nothing more original or natural than original sin and natural law as answers to the pressing problems of this age.

2. *Niebuhr, Dewey and Human Nature.* It has been maintained[1] that Niebuhr's reflections on human nature have provided a new generation of liberals with insights that transcend the limitations of Dewey. On the one hand Dewey is pictured as a disciple of the Enlightenment, confident of the intrinsic goodness of human nature, one of the latter-day *illuminati* who see man everywhere in the chains of ignorance and who hold that scientific knowledge will usher in a millennial era of social happiness through democratic planning. On the other hand Niebuhr is seen as a shrewd Pauline, aware of man's selfishness, and his inevitable incapacity to free himself from the effects of original sin through his own unassisted efforts. Supplied with this more accurate picture of human nature, Niebuhr is supposed to see the folly of placing too much trust in any central group of social planners, while Dewey, it is argued, was ineffectually innocent, a child of light in Niebuhr's biblical phrase, but unable to illuminate this wicked world of gas chambers and mushroom clouds. Niebuhr becomes the symbol of tough, Christian realism, while Dewey represents soft-headed, complacent, dreamy secular liberalism.

What we must consider, then, is the relation between Dewey's and Niebuhr's views of human nature, the grounds offered for them, and their political consequences.

1 For example, by Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., with whom I should like to agree on this matter more than I do. He has read this article with the kindness of a friend and the objectivity of a scholar, and has made many helpful suggestions in spite of disagreeing with the main points of my criticism of Niebuhr. For his own views see his forthcoming brilliant essay "The Revaluation of Liberalism"; also his review of Niebuhr's *Irony of American History* in *Christianity and Society,* Vol. 17 (1952).

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Dewey is presumably a child of light, but what is a child of light in Niebuhr's view? He is defined by contrast to children of darkness "who know no law beyond their will and interest." By contrast "those who believe that self-interest *should* be brought under the discipline of a higher law could then be termed 'the children of light' "; the children of light "may thus be defined as those who *seek* to bring self-interest under the discipline of a more universal law and in harmony with a more universal good." [My italics.]

Surely there is nothing wrong with being a child of light, then. To believe that one should bring self-interest under a more universal law and in harmony with a more universal good, is to act morally; and surely the effort to act morally is not being attacked by Niebuhr. One can hardly believe that he opposes the effort to bring self-interest under law, in spite of his grotesquely false statement that "nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime." Therefore one seeks for a more plausible explanation of what he means.

As we push on we see that Niebuhr may escape absurdity, but only at the expense of making it silly to say that Dewey is a child of light and at the risk of making the whole distinction between the two kinds of children useless. In the last analysis Niebuhr may mean by a child of light either (a) one who thinks that it is *easy* to bring self-interest under law, or (b) one who thinks that we can bring self-interest *completely* under a higher law, that we will reach a time when men will *always* act so as to give only limited weight to their own desires. But on either view of a child of light, it is preposterous to suppose that Dewey is a child of light and doubtful to suppose that the contrast between children of light and children of darkness can illuminate the ideological struggles of our time. It is almost ridiculous for Niebuhr to present his own version of the Christian view as the only one to navigate between idiotic optimism and equally idiotic pessimism, as if all rationalists and naturalists said that men were gods, while their extreme opponents maintained that they were devils, and only Niebuhr knew the middle way.

To get back to Dewey and his position in Niebuhr's scheme. Dewey has never supposed that the way to social happiness would be *easy,* nor has he ever said that a time would come when *all* human action would be morally right and all tensions resolved. The following

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passage from *Human Nature and Conduct* may suffice to bring out the point:

> In Aristotle this conception of an end which exhausts all realization and excludes all potentiality appears as a definition of the highest excellence. It of necessity excludes all want and struggle and all dependencies. It is neither practical nor social. Nothing is left but a self-revolving, self-sufficing thought engaged in contemplating its own sufficiency. Some forms of Oriental morals have united this logic with a profounder psychology, and have seen that the final terminus on this road is Nirvana, an obliteration of all thought and desire. In medieval science, the ideal reappeared as a definition of heavenly bliss accessible only to a redeemed immortal soul. Herbert Spencer is far enough away from Aristotle, medieval Christianity and Buddhism; but the idea reemerges in his conception of a goal of evolution in which adaptation of organism to environment is complete and final. In popular thought, the conception lies in the vague thought of a remote state of attainment in which we shall be beyond 'temptation,' and in which virtue by its own inertia will persist as a triumphant consummation. Even Kant who begins with a complete scorn for happiness ends with an "ideal" of the eternal and undisturbed union of virtue and joy, though in his case nothing but a symbolic approximation is admitted to be feasible.

It must be said in Niebuhr's behalf that there is an awful lot in Dewey's writing which suggests that the way to a better society *is* easy. For it is true that Dewey in his later writings tended to identify the intelligent solution of a social problem as one that dispenses with the use of force, and therefore seemed to imply that it was never desirable to apply force. If Niebuhr criticizes Dewey on this count, I can understand Niebuhr, but I reject another aspect of Niebuhr's attack on Dewey's attitude toward intelligence. Once we distinguish between the relatively specific conclusion that all political problems can be solved without the appeal to force, and the more general philosophical thesis that no conclusion about the ways of achieving certain ends should be arrived at except by the use of intelligence or scientific method, we see a far more profound issue between Dewey and Niebuhr. In other words, if one identifies the use of intelligence with the use of absolutely peaceful methods, one is accepting a dubious thesis within political technology itself, but if one identifies the use of intelligence with the use of what is commonly

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called scientific method in the evaluation of judgments of political technology, one can only ask: What other ways are there? One must remember, of course, that we are thinking of political technology as the discipline in which we ask about the best ways of achieving certain social and political ends, and that the answers to such questions take the form of statements to the effect that a certain kind of action is most likely to achieve a certain kind of result.

3. *Human Nature and Politics.* So far, I see no reason to think of Niebuhr as having demolished or replaced Dewey as a social or political philosopher. But we have not yet dealt with what is thought to be Niebuhr's chief distinction: his deeply "realistic" vision of man's state by comparison with Dewey's supposedly idle dreams. What can we say about this contrast after our earlier conclusions about Dewey's relations to the children of light?

Here it seems necessary to say, as one must so frequently say when one is bound by neither formula nor prejudice, that the differences which Niebuhr magnifies so dramatically and misleadingly are differences in degree of emphasis on the part of thinkers who see that man is not perfect. Some think that the resolution of social tension is extremely difficult and some are more optimistic; in short, there are disputes as to how heavenly earth can be. But can this bare, unqualified, banal dichotomy, if it is the real dichotomy between the children of light and the children of darkness, help us divide the intellectual or political globe in an interesting way? All we have here is the recognition that men are somewhere between the serpent and the dove, and while Niebuhr puts us closer to the serpent, Dewey puts us closer to the dove. But the serious question for political action is "How close?" in either case. Niebuhr's more recent reflections lead him to answer: "Too close to the serpent to allow for successful central planning," and for this reason some of our younger liberals who reject socialism in favor of Keynesianism now think of Niebuhr as one of the deepest political thinkers in America: for example, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

It should be remembered, however, that Niebuhr has not always held his present political position. He defended socialism in his earlier work, when he held the same Pauline and Augustinian doctrine of man. What has happened since then is that Niebuhr's skepticism

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about man's power to help himself has deepened; Niebuhr has learned things about man and society which were not previously encapsulated in the view of man he inherited from Augustine and Paul. That view is consistent with a variety of political positions, and it's absurd to suppose that Niebuhr only recently began to wake up to "implications" that he should have seen in his salad days. Niebuhr saw Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco in operation, and this, more than any theological speculation about man, must have brought home to him the dangers of limiting political freedom. In this respect he is like Dewey and all human beings who learn by experience. It is therefore absurd to say that while Niebuhr has a theory which permits him to see that man is not perfect, Dewey is tied to a philosophy preventing him from seeing the same obvious fact. The difference between Niebuhr and Dewey must be put in more concrete terms and once we put it in this way we shall be leaving relatively empty "theories of human nature" for the solid ground of politics.

The contemporary liberal's fascination with Niebuhr, I suggest, comes less from Niebuhr's dark theory of human nature and more from his actual political pronouncements, from the fact that he is a shrewd, courageous, and right-minded man on many political questions. Those who applaud his politics are too liable to turn then to his theory of human nature and praise it as the philosophical instrument of Niebuhr's political agreement with themselves. But very few of those whom I have elsewhere called "atheists for Niebuhr," follow this inverted logic to its conclusion: they don't move from praise of Niebuhr's theory of human nature to praise of its theological ground. We may admire them for drawing the line somewhere, but certainly not for their consistency.

4. *Historical Inevitability and Original Sin.* Precisely because of the emergence of Niebuhr as an influence on so many distinguished liberals of the present generation, there is a greater need for some of Dewey's methodological exhortations. Dewey is committed to the use of empirical methods in discovering what man is or is not likely to achieve, while Niebuhr is, in the last analysis, a devotee of the a priori road that begins with a theology based on faith. Furthermore, Niebuhr is committed to a view of history which in its own way is

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as rigid as any promulgated by Marx or the more dogmatic theorists of the Enlightenment. Niebuhr constantly speaks of "the perennial and persistent character of human egotism in any possible society," "the vast forces of historical destiny," "inexorable historical developments," and of social conflict as an "inevitability in human history," in a way that leaves him open to all the arguments so powerfully deployed by Isaiah Berlin in his essay, *Historical Inevitability.*

It is true that Niebuhr often shows a fondness for citing historical evidence in support of his conclusions; he says, for example, that the doctrine of original sin "emphasizes a fact which every page of human history attests." But such evidence as he does offer is surely not enough to establish the thunderous statement that man *cannot* conquer his selfish interests to the point of establishing a planned society. His dark view of man's estate is, in his own mind, a corollary of his doctrine of original sin and that is a view of man which, as he says in his *Nature and Destiny of Man,* transcends the canons of rationality. If history should fail to support his view, or if it should at any moment appear to go against it, Niebuhr's attitude toward his own doctrine would not be seriously affected, since his own conviction rests on faith. In this respect it resembles all of the interpretations of history, like Augustine's and Hegel's, which are demolished in Berlin's essay. But the matter should stand differently with those of Niebuhr's admirers who have not yet been persuaded of the theology underlying Niebuhr's reflections on history. How can those who are sober historians and who reject the pretensions of inevitability and necessity that they find in Toynbee or Marx, react to the block historical universe that Niebuhr portrays when he speaks of inexorable historical developments, vast forces of historical destiny, and inevitability in human history?

5. *From Kierkegaard to Hegel.* I have said little about the details of Niebuhr's theology, except to point out that it rests on faith and that it implies the inevitability of sinfulness in history. And although there is hardly space for dealing with the labyrinth of Niebuhr's theology, it is desirable to say something, however brief, about the inevitability of sin in Niebuhr's view, if only to remind some of his more agnostic admirers once again of what he says in his more theological writings. It is to Niebuhr's credit that he recog-

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nizes that "the Christian doctrine of sin in its classical form offends both rationalists and moralists by maintaining the seemingly absurd position that man sins inevitably and by a fateful necessity, but that he is nevertheless to be held responsible for actions which are prompted by an ineluctable fate." Indeed, he removes the qualifier "seemingly" in other passages. Relying in the most difficult spots on Kierkegaard, Niebuhr begins by asserting that man is both creature and creator, made in the image of God and yet finite, caught in the necessities of nature and yet able to transcend them. Man's freedom creates the temptation to sin, and this produces his anxiety. His anxiety leads him to try to escape from finitude to infinity, to try to be God rather than to subject himself to the will of God. Lacking faith, man tries to establish himself independently, and by doing so, by giving his immediate necessities a consideration which they do not deserve, he loses his true self. This is why the sin of inordinate self-love points "to the prior sin of lack of trust in God." Man's anxiety arises out of his finiteness and his freedom, but when he comes to the fork in the road, he chooses the wrong path rather than the right because he has also committed the "prior sin of unbelief." And then all of the other sins come tumbling after. Finiteness and freedom *by themselves* would never lead to these other sins. The sin of unbelief is the extra factor and it, so to speak, lies behind the other sins of history. They are inevitable once we grant that we are doomed to be finite, fated to be free, and forced into unbelief. At best we can use our freedom to become aware of all this and to develop contrition, but even contrition is no permanent protection against slipping into the abyss that anxiety and unbelief prepare for us.

Niebuhr says that none of this is to be taken "literalistically," though one should suppose that it is to be taken literally. He criticizes literalistic distortions of Christian doctrine, such as the view that we inherit corruption. This is connected with Niebuhr's belief that we are not doomed to sin by *natural* causes, with his opposition to the Pelagian notion that original sin is a force of inertia in nature, and with his constant rejection of the view that man's *finitude* is solely responsible for his sinning. All of this Niebuhr expresses by saying that "evil in man is a consequence of his *inevitable though not necessary* unwillingness to acknowledge his dependence, to accept his finiteness and to admit his insecurity," and so it is important

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to say a few words on this contrast between the necessary and the inevitable, especially in the light of what was said earlier about Niebuhr's views on history.

The problem of necessity is one of the most difficult philosophical problems, and therefore one can never be sure of understanding even what the most clear-headed philosophers say on this subject. But there is a usage according to which what happens necessarily happens inevitably. Thus Webster, when he explains the meaning of "inevitable," quotes Burke as saying: "It was inevitable; it was necessary; it was planted in the nature of things." That is to say, we sometimes take "inevitable" and "necessary" as interchangeable, even if as philosophers we are not altogether sure of what they mean. What, then, does Niebuhr want to bring out by distinguishing them? So far as I can see, that we do not sin necessarily in the sense of being determined by what he calls *natural* or physical causes, because we transcend nature. But Niebuhr says that we cannot avoid sinning. His point is that we are driven to sin, not by physical events, but by other things which are equally beyond our control. Niebuhr is therefore free to demarcate a certain kind of unavoidable act, namely that which is caused physically, and call it a *necessary* one, while he calls another kind of unavoidable act—the kind produced by our finitude, freedom, and lack of faith—*inevitable*. The important point is, however, that he believes (a) that we commit certain evil acts which are unavoidable, and (b) that we are morally responsible for them, that is, subject to blame for them.

Now there have been philosophers who have tried to make the inevitability of an act consistent with praising or blaming it. And there are others, like Mr. Berlin in the essay I have cited, who think that inevitability and blame are incompatible. But Niebuhr is a very different kind of thinker. He agrees that there is a contradiction between them but, in his Hegelian and Whitmanesque way, accepts it. The doctrine of original sin, he says, "remains absurd from the standpoint of a pure rationalism, for it expresses a relation between fate and freedom which cannot be fully rationalized, unless the paradox be accepted as a rational understanding of the limits of rationality and as an expression of faith that a rationally irresolvable contradiction may point to a truth which logic cannot contain. Formally there can be, of course, no conflict between logic and

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truth. The laws of logic are reason's guard against chaos in the realm of truth. They eliminate contradictory assertions. But there is no resource in logical rules to help us understand complex phenomena, exhibiting characteristics which seem to require that they be placed into contradictory categories of reason." Some readers may appreciate what Niebuhr means when he adds that "loyalty to all the facts may require a provisional defiance of logic, lest complexity in the facts of experience be denied for the sake of a premature logical consistency," but how long does he want us to wait? With such a modest remark Niebuhr may disarm even some of the most logically hardened of his readers, but he can't help making them wince when he calls on Hegel's dialectic in his defense: "Hegel's 'dialectic' is a logic invented for the purpose of doing justice to the fact of 'becoming' as a phenomenon which belongs into [*sic*] the category of neither 'being' nor 'non-being.' The Christian doctrine of original sin, with its seemingly contradictory assertions about the inevitability of sin and man's responsibility for sin, is a dialectical truth which does justice to the fact that man's self-love and self-centredness is inevitable. . . ." How easy it is for the extremes to meet and what an irony of history it is that a follower of Kierkegaard—the great enemy of Hegel—should have to appeal to Hegel to save himself at the most vital point in his argument.

6. *Enter Lippmann and Locke.* In turning from the thought of Niebuhr to the recent writing of Walter Lippmann we find a similar preoccupation with human deficiency, selfishness, and ineptitude, only this time the fault is said to lie not in power-mad leaders who plan us into totalitarianism but rather with the people, the masses who have secured so much power over government and turned statesmen into lackeys. In one respect, therefore, Lippmann and Niebuhr appear at opposite poles of the social thinking that has gained prominence since the work of Dewey and Holmes went into eclipse. Lippmann fears the masses and Niebuhr fears the leaders, so that while Niebuhr has replaced Dewey as the hero of some liberals who have abandoned socialism, Lippmann has come to replace Justice Holmes as the hero of the more conservative young men. The Augustinian doctrine of original sin in Niebuhr is neatly matched by the Thomistic concept of natural law in Lippmann.

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The doctrine of natural law is one of the oldest and most debated doctrines in the history of moral and political philosophy. It is the central theory of the Catholic Church on moral and political matters; it was adopted by John Locke; it influenced the language and thought of the Declaration of Independence; it was rejected by Dewey, Holmes, and Veblen; it has recently been revived by many thinkers who, like Lippmann, cannot bear the absence of a set of moral principles which are universally binding, certain, rationally established by the inspection of universals, essences, or meanings, depending on which outmoded epistemology or ethics is adopted.

In holding certain "truths to be self-evident," the framers of the Declaration of Independence were probably echoing Aquinas in *The Treatise on Law,* after he loudly had been echoed by John Locke. The latter, because he was so confused on the fundamental philosophical questions touching on the status of natural law, is one of the most *interesting* thinkers in the history of the subject. His position is central in the American tradition, and his own puzzlement reflects the philosophical problems surrounding natural law.

Aquinas believed that there are self-evident principles which, as he says, are those principles whose "predicate is contained in the notion of the subject"[2]; and Locke believed that there are self-evident principles, which he explained as those to which we assent "at first hearing and understanding their terms," or those which "the mind cannot doubt, as soon as it understands the words." And although Aquinas and Locke agreed that there were self-evident principles, they diverged on the most important of all problems so far as natural law is concerned. In answer to the question: Are there any self-evident *practical,* i.e., *moral,* principles? Aquinas was quite consistent and answered affirmatively, but Locke wobbled in the most scandalous way. Sometimes Locke says that there are self-evident practical principles, viz., self-evident principles of natural law, and sometimes he denies that there are any self-evident practical principles. In a sense Locke's contradiction on natural law is the counterpart of Niebuhr's in the case of original sin; only Locke did not have the benefit of Hegelian dialectic.

2 He added that "some propositions are self-evident only to the wise, who understand the meanings of the terms of such propositions."

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I do not think that Locke saw this contradiction, but it should not escape the careful reader of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and his *Second Treatise of Government,* both published in 1690. Locke tries to refute the belief that "there are in the understanding certain *innate principles*; some primary notions . . . characters, as it were, stamped upon the mind of man; which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it." But an innate principle is quite different from a self-evident principle, according to Locke, and therefore he is not involved in any obvious inconsistency *here,* as some of his antagonistic critics have implied. It was perfectly possible, Locke thought, for a man who believed as he did that all our ideas arise out of experience, to hold that some true statements whose terms expressed these ideas, are self-evident. For example, the idea of red arises from experience, and the idea of green does; nevertheless Locke maintained that anyone who grasps these ideas, who understands the meanings of the terms "red," "green," and the others in the statement, "Nothing which is red all over is green all over," will immediately assent to that statement. It is therefore self-evident but *not innate.*

Locke's blatant inconsistency consists in the fact that he says in the *Essay* that there are no self-evident practical principles but denies this in his *Second Treatise.* In the *Essay* he holds that so far from there being innate practical principles, there are not even any self-evident practical principles.

In the *Essay* Locke says:

> I think *there cannot any one moral rule be proposed whereof a man may not justly demand a reason* [his italics]: which would be perfectly ridiculous and absurd if they were innate; *or so much as self-evident* [my italics], which every innate principle must needs be, and not need any proof to ascertain its truth, nor want any reason to gain it approbation. He would be thought void of common sense who asked on the one side, or on the other side went to give a reason why 'it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be.' It carries its own light and evidence with it, and needs no other proof: he that understands the terms assents to it for its own sake or else nothing will ever be able to prevail with him to do it. But should that most unshaken rule of morality and foundation of all social virtue, 'That one should do as he would be done unto,' be proposed to one who never heard of it before,

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but yet is of capacity to understand its meaning; might he not without any absurdity ask a reason why? And were not he that proposed it bound to make out the truth and reasonableness of it to him?

It is puzzling after all of this to turn to his *Second Treatise of Government* and to find Locke saying that there is "*nothing more evident* [my italics] than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another." Now clearly this is a moral or practical principle: the tell-tale word "should" indicates that. Therefore, according to the doctrine of the *Essay* many things are more evident than this natural law of equality; indeed, as we have seen, *all* self-evident *speculative* principles are more evident than it is. If it should not be obvious that Locke is contradicting himself we have only to read a little further on where he says with approval: "This equality of men by nature the judicious Hooker looks upon as . . . *evident in itself* [my italics], and beyond all question." What more do we need to show that the Locke of the *Essay* contradicts the Locke of the *Second Treatise of Government* which appeared in the same year? The charge is simple: he at once affirms and denies that moral principles are self-evident.

7. *"They all go into the dark."* Mr. Lippmann is eager to revive the notion of self-evident natural law and to put it in the hands of wise statesmen who will not be so tied to the demands of the people. Presumably with the approval of Mr. Mortimer J. Adler, who is thanked in the preface of *The Public Philosophy* and who has expressed similar views in a less winning way, Mr. Lippmann chastises positivist professors who have subverted natural law through a refusal to recognize that there is a realm of essences in addition to a realm of existence. It is ironical, therefore, that positivists like Rudolf Carnap have in recent times been the most active defenders of the notion of analyticity (the sister notion of self-evidence, as we have seen) as well as supporters of the view that meanings and universals exist. Positivists, of course, have used the notions of analyticity and meaning quite differently. They are mainly interested in showing that mathematical propositions are analytic, that is to say, true by virtue of the meanings of their component terms, and they vehemently (and laudably) deny that the principles of morality may be so viewed.

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But it is certainly wrong to say, as Lippmann does, that all of them deny the existence of the universals or meanings which are so essential for the philosopher of natural law.

In opposition to Lippmann, Locke, Aquinas, and the positivists, to say nothing of a vast number of the other philosophers like Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore in some of their writings, I think that the notion of an analytic statement, the notion of a self-evident statement as conceived by Aquinas and Locke, and the meanings so dear to all of them and Lippmann, are first of all obscure in themselves and secondly incapable of sustaining the philosophical load which has been put upon them. I shall concentrate on the significance of this contention for the doctrine of natural law, though I can at best outline only part of my view here.

Very few philosophers have taken the existence of meanings, conceived as universals, for granted. The usual pattern of philosophical argument is to assume that the reader believes in the existence of physical objects—the tables and chairs of epistemology books—but that he is too dull to see that universals like the attribute of being a table also exist. And so it is frequently pointed out that we couldn't understand the general word "chair" unless it had a meaning quite distinct from every individual chair in the universe. In this way the existence of meanings construed as properties of things is supposedly proven. But then a new move must be made, for the ordinary man has a rather limited conception of existence; in other words he uses the word "exists" narrowly, as applying only to physical objects which exist in space and time, and this won't do.

Having begun with a tolerance and a garden-variety understanding of the word "exist," the ordinary man has now been led to the point where he must see that there are at least two meanings of "exist" and that this is the solution to the problem of understanding. But can any one suppose that this postulation of Platonic meanings really illuminates the notion of understanding? We think immediately, and rightly so, of dormitive virtues "explaining" why opium puts people to sleep.

The situation is even worse when we examine Lippmann's introduction of essences. The Platonic theorist of understanding has the comparatively easy job of showing how understanding is *possible,* whereas Lippmann must show that a belief in self-evident principles

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of natural law is *necessary*. In other words, the philosopher who offers the theory of understanding outlined above can at least assume that the man he is trying to persuade understands *some* words, and after having found out what those words are, the philosopher may begin to crank his machines and grind out his universals in order to "explain" how the understanding the man has is possible. But a theorist of natural law will frequently have to face people who don't believe that there are self-evident moral principles to begin with. How can he get the machinery rolling then? Where can he begin? What premises can the theorist of natural law start with? Surely it is not self-evident that *there are* self-evident principles of natural law and therefore we must be shown that there are.

It may be said in reply that the theorist of natural law *can* deal with the man who has not quite made up his mind, the man who is at most doubtful about whether there are self-evident principles of morality. But this is *par excellence* a situation in which the philosopher of natural law appeals to things which are at least as dubious and at least as obscure as that which is to be defended or explained. Does Lippmann suppose that he is likely to persuade such a doubtful man that there are essences which if properly unpacked make the truth of moral principles evident? Even if he were to accomplish the first bit of required persuasion—that is to say, even if the public should be persuaded of the existence of essences—Lippmann will fail to show them that the principles of political morality are self-evident statements about men in which, as Aquinas says, "the predicate is contained in the notion of the subject," or logically deducible therefrom. We know that Locke pleaded old age when he was asked to do this by his correspondent Molyneux, and there is a very touching letter to Molyneux in which Locke writes:

> The Gospel contains so perfect a body of Ethics that reason may be excused from that inquiry, since she may find man's duty clearer and easier in revelation than in herself. This is the excuse of a man who, having a sufficient rule of his actions, is content therewith, and thinks he may employ the little time and strength he has in other researches wherein he is more in the dark.

8. *Ethics without Essences*. Finally we must ask ourselves about the man who *does* believe that there are certain self-evident principles

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of morality. Can he be persuaded that there are essences which, when unpacked, yield moral principles? Unfortunately he is often persuaded too easily and our success with him should not give us too much confidence. The point is that all of this philosophical machinery is not so much an effective instrument for rational persuasion as for self-encouragement, useful for philosophical whistling in the dark. Having persuaded himself of certain moral principles and having discovered that some people in other places and at other times have doubted them, the weak man needs support. He needs to say that things in the realm of essence are so related as to substantiate or corroborate these principles of morality.

We all have deep moral convictions: we firmly believe certain moral principles which we try to act on to the best of our ability. They make up, along with others, the foundations of our whole structure of belief; they constitute our terminal beliefs. We want them to be consistent with each other and to fit in harmoniously and simply with other, less confidently held beliefs; we want this structure to mesh with experience and feeling. But individuals and societies have surrendered many beliefs which they once accepted as terminal, and some of these beliefs are moral beliefs. What, then, is the purpose of inventing a mysterious realm of essence *of which* our terminal beliefs are supposed to be true? Wouldn't it be saner to recognize that we all have our ultimate convictions at any moment, that they are not absolutely immune to change (though we can resolve, at our own peril, to make them permanently immune), that some people adopt the same beliefs as terminal and others don't? Who are the people we get along with? Very often the people with whom we have a great deal of agreement on these fundamental beliefs. Who are the people we quarrel with? Very often those with whom we don't share these beliefs. The point is that we and those whose lines end up at the same terminal shouldn't need the kind of mutual encouragement that comes from inventing a realm of essences beneath (or above) the terminal: and those who go in different directions are the last people in the world who are likely to use essences in the same way even if they agreed that such things existed.

I hesitate to assign all of this view to Holmes, but I think that it converges with what he says in his little essay "Natural Law." First when he says:

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If . . . the truth may be defined as the system of my (intellectual) limitations, what gives it objectivity is the fact that I find my fellowman to a greater or less extent (never wholly) subject to the same *Can't Helps*. If I think I am sitting at a table I find that the other persons present agree with me; so if I say that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. If I am in a minority of one they send for a doctor or lock me up; and I am so far able to transcend the to me convincing testimony of my senses or my reason as to recognize that if I am alone probably something is wrong with my works.

And also when he continues:

The jurists who believe in natural law seem to me to be in that naive state of mind that accepts what has been familiar and accepted by them and their neighbors as something that must be accepted by all men everywhere.

9. *"Lay not that flattering unction to your soul."* In certain parts of theology Niebuhr may repair to the Hegelian dialectic too quickly and in others he may find it extremely difficult to beat a clear logical path to the world, but one cannot accuse him of the same sort of logical magic in discussing natural law. On that subject his view is deep and admirable, and he sees the anti-democratic potentialities of the doctrine even though it has been used by ardent democrats. Niebuhr decries Catholic as well as liberal confidence in natural law and shows the extent to which the doctrine can be twisted into special pleading and hypocritical justification of self-interest—especially when an institutional authority is set up as the custodian of morals. On this point Niebuhr's humility is encouraging even to those who cannot accept his theology. Niebuhr manages to give up "essentialism" in his theory of morality even though he maintains it in his discussion of original sin. After seeing the defects of the philosophy of natural law, it is but a short step to giving up the whole effort to distill the essence of man. Yet Niebuhr fails to take it. For that reason the various Augustinan inevitabilities remain to plague Niebuhr even after the Thomistic necessities have departed.

By returning to Aquinas and Lippmann, we can see what Niebuhr means about natural law. Aquinas, as we have seen, says that some self-evident propositions are self-evident only to the wise, and Lippmann speaks of the principles of natural law as those which

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all men, "when they are sincerely and lucidly rational," will regard as self-evident. But who are the wise and the sincerely and lucidly rational? In practice the devotees of natural law identify them by their willingness to say that certain specific moral principles are self-evident. It is not as though partisans of natural law identify wise or rational men on the basis of a clear criterion independent of the specific principles that are said to be self-evident. On the contrary, to be a wise man according to Aquinas is virtually to be one to whom the moral principles are self-evident. This is most strikingly illustrated in Aquinas' statement that "to one who understands that an angel is not a body, it is self-evident that an angel is not circumscriptively in a place: but this is not evident to the unlearned, for they cannot grasp it." By similar reasoning some partisans of natural law must say that Justice Holmes couldn't possibly have understood what the term 'man' meant because he did not find the principle "Every man has a right to live" self-evident. But consider what Holmes said on the point:

> The most fundamental of the supposed pre-existing rights—the right to life—is sacrificed without a scruple not only in war, but whenever the interest of society, that is, of the predominant power in the community is thought to demand it. Whether that interest is the interest of mankind in the long run no one can tell, and as, in any event, to those who do not think with Kant and Hegel, it is only an interest, the sanctity disappears. I remember a very tender-hearted judge being of the opinion that closing a hatch to stop a fire and the destruction of cargo was justified even if it was known that doing so would stifle a man below. It is idle to illustrate further, because to those who agree with me I am uttering commonplaces and to those who disagree I am ignoring the necessary foundations of thought. The a priori men generally call the dissentients superficial.

It is ironic that while Locke believed in the self-evident principles of natural law his own attack on the doctrine of innate moral principles is a most profound statement of the dangers in the doctrine of natural law. He said:

> It was of no small advantage to those who affected to be masters and teachers, to make this the principle of principles—*that principles must not be questioned.* For, having once established this tenet—that there are innate principles, it put their followers upon a necessity of receiving

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some doctrines as such; which was to take them off from the use of their own reason and judgment, and put them on believing and taking them upon trust without further examination: in which posture of blind credulity, they might be more easily governed by, and made useful to some sort of men, who had the skill and office to guide them. Nor is it a small power it gives one man over another, to have the authority to be the dictator of principles, and teacher of unquestionable truths; and to make a man swallow that for an innate principle which may serve his purpose who teacheth them.

These words of Locke have more importance for us today than do all of his self-contradictory speculations about the natural law, for we live in an age that is crowded with dictators of principles who can read essences as easily as men used to read the stars. Whether one chooses to face them in the spirit of Dewey and Holmes or whether one chooses the faith of Dr. Niebuhr, is itself one of those ultimate questions which every man must answer for himself. In answering it and in settling upon his fundamental convictions, whether moral or metaphysical, a man will always run the risk of being called unwise, irrational, ignorant, or even mad by the dictators of principles. Sometimes he may be persuaded to alter his beliefs, but sometimes he may reply as Hamlet replied to the Queen:

> *My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,*
> *And makes as healthful music. It is not madness*
> *That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,*
> *And I the matter will re-word, which madness*
> *Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,*
> *Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,*
> *That not your trespass, but my madness speaks.*

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Sonya Rudikoff

A BAROQUE AFFAIR

. . . je sçay mes perfidies.
—Phèdre

Lucy knew all about him even before they met, but he never told her anything to equal that first impression, so we might begin there.

Donald Craven was a writer, an old friend of Professor Plaut's. Lucy Doob met him at the Plauts' one night during her sophomore year, when he came up from New York to lecture on the Baroque. It was the only thing that interested him, he informed her. It explained his passion for Italy, where one found the greatest Baroque of all. Mr. Craven assured Miss Doob that the best life was possible only in a place of mad excrescence, and baldaquins and coffered ceilings—if life were possible at all. Boston, for example, horrified the sensibility. Lucy had always wondered why. Boston, Mr. Craven said, was refined beyond the point of civilization. Lucy was quite impressed to learn this. Further, she learned that an appreciation for the Baroque must consort with a hatred for New England, and for the neat, frigid, inauthentic eighteenth-century buildings of the college that was paying his expenses for a week end of lectures.

That night, in the Plauts' living room, he insisted on making his own drink. Everyone else had whisky and soda, but Donald Craven kept his own ingredients on a little table near his chair: gin and water, which reminded him of growing up during Prohibition. He said that was the only thing worth drinking. Lucy Doob asked him why he didn't try syllabub, which was equally Baroque, and his interest in her started from that.

The Plauts took no responsibility for any friendships inaugurated in their living room, so they neither encouraged nor dissuaded Lucy when this man wanted to walk her back to her room. Although the Plauts were still interested in his ideas, they had known Craven long

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enough to be bored by his situation. Still, Lucy's enlightenment thrived whenever Mrs. Plaut talked about Craven—which occasions were perhaps more frequent than the subject demanded. This faculty wife liked to talk; and so Lucy already knew that Craven was married, that it was a mistake of his youth; that he was in despair, and that he now willed himself into misery by preserving the form of a relation that had ceased to please him. Professor Plaut's student could not know, of course, that if Donald Craven failed to walk back with her, he would spend all his energies in stalking Mrs. Plaut. Lucy was not aware of the range of his arguments, nor of how often he tried, nor how he pretended to make common cause with Charmian Plaut because her own situation so much resembled his. Lucy had often heard Mrs. Plaut's cruel jokes about the student tutorials—the perfectly *morbid* insistence that they were *really* held in the dormitories—but Lucy preferred to believe that her own tutorial in Seventeenth Century would be immune to such attacks, because of her exertions to "be nice" to Mrs. Plaut. Naturally, that lady never troubled to "be nice" to her; as Charmian Plaut always said, the girls hated her anyhow, nice or not, so she felt she could afford the luxury of a mean spirit, which was precisely the luxury her husband's students could not afford. For all their advantages, those *infants* could not know how Craven interpreted Lucy Doob's presence at the Plauts' that night, nor understand how Charmian tried to nourish that interpretation. Nor how Professor Plaut himself liked to justify his wife's apparent fantasy in order to keep another one out of her mind, but this one a reality she hadn't yet imagined.

Donald Craven walked back with Lucy Doob. He coughed, cursed the chilly air and the feeling of health it attempted to give him, but he was not so desperate that he couldn't respond to a finely encrusted pearly moon, or a glitter of ice on the path, or a façade of evergreens at the end of the road. Nor was he too dissociated for conversation. Lucy spoke pleasantly, with just the expected degree of silly extravagance, but was perhaps intelligent—although her only act of intelligence so far was a slight suspension of that eagerness. He talked to her about Italy and then he told her about herself.

Lucy did not gape, as expected, nor ask how Craven could know this about her. So Craven could hardly be flattered by her silence, then, or even especially pleased by the way she regarded him, but

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he *did* ask her to write to him when he went back to New York. Lucy did not ask him to write first, but said instead that she really loved writing letters and would adore writing to him—although, she said, she might not write regularly. As he walked back to the Plauts', he surprised himself by wondering why she hadn't offered to show him her poetry. It was quite a change for him.

And he was a change for Lucy too. When he left her at the house, she had the sense about him that he would stay up very late drinking gin and water. Without knowing why, she was sure he would sleep all morning and get up only a few minutes before his afternoon seminar, sleepy, bedraggled, splenetic, and late, but very impressive. As Lucy came into her pleasant room, with its Bates bedspread and matching drapes, its bright maple furniture, and with all her furry animals and the photographs of Mummy and Dad, she was a little shocked, and mentally forgave herself for something. There was an early, busy day ahead of her, neat schedules and regular hours which seemed so incompatible with the feeling of the Baroque. And Lucy Doob was not sure she knew what Despair really was, except that it had to do with being cynical. To judge from what Craven said, it meant not being excited about life, and therefore, inevitably, it meant being "mature"—only a child could be happy with things as they were! So here was a dilemma for Lucy, who was really very much excited about being a sophomore, being eighteen and a half, having Seventeenth Century with Plaut who didn't take just anyone—and then having such a good room this year, no roommate, and such a marvelous schedule. Lucy knew she did not really despair about her life, but now it seemed that she should. Even before she pulled off her pink angora sweater, she went over to the dresser and tore up the typewritten list and schedule she had stuck in the mirror that morning.

Lucy's friends in the suite heard her come in, and now they all clattered in to hear about the party. But Lucy had just begun to stop telling her friends about all her feelings, so she gave them only a brief official report.

"Was *Mrs.* Plaut as awful as ever?" asked Binky.

Lucy nodded, as if she still had all the same old feelings.

"And what about Craven," Kappy wanted to know. Lucy told.

And Bunchy couldn't resist asking, "How do Craven and Professor Plaut get along, do you think?"

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Lucy tried to decide whether to say he was an old drunk or pretend she was interested in him. They expected *something*—so she exaggerated because that was easier. She also wanted him to have a lot of people at his last two lectures, which would be a chore because half the house was away for the week end. But Binky and Cookie and Kappy and Bunchy would all spread her extravagant report, so heavy with a kind of girlish admiration she no longer quite felt. Still, it would make everyone go to the lecture on German Baroque, the one that Craven predicted would be so bad. It didn't occur to Lucy, as she went over the old litany of contorted awe and worship, that then she would never be able to account for his letters if they ever came.

This was the situation of Lucy Doob's meeting with Donald Craven, this muddle of motives and fantasies and lies and despairing spirit. As for her, she thought, for instance, that the Plauts' life was rather exciting and *terribly* unusual. She thought it was a sign of deeper love than anything she had seen that the Plauts quarreled openly, attacked each other, threatened violence; that they were rude, impolite, unfaithful, and weary of each other. All of their friends were just like them, and Lucy thought it was a wonderful way to be. She had never seen drinking like that before. The Plauts drank as if they were cultivating their wounds, and to Lucy, who had known only polite social drinking or none at all, this seemed so honest and forthright, that she came to distrust drinking which was not equally desperate. Donald Craven was a part of this new view she had of people, this new sense of the possibilities in personal relations, and she thought she was beginning to come close to the heart of meaning.

It was good that Lucy learned to lie, because Craven replied to her letters irregularly. In spite of that night and the promise of interested excitement, Craven's glow for Lucy faded before the glare of her inexorable college life. There was also someone at Amherst, and someone at Columbia, and a Dartmouth Green Key who *didn't* make milk punch. Craven figured more in Lucy's conversation, but less in her thoughts, although during the next few months she was heard to repeat some of his opinions as her own; but there was nothing irregular about this. Their relationship—or whatever it should be called, no word is exactly right—floundered, rose and fell, promised more than it gave. There were letters, appointments made and

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broken, other people involved. Craven reportedly tried his wife again, but gave it up and got a divorce, according to Charmian Plaut. Lucy was in and out of entanglements, and Craven appeared from time to time like a messenger with a few lines to speak. During Christmas vacation, he called her in New York, but that was when Roger Staley was so much in question, so Craven could of course not be. During spring vacation, when he was at Yaddo, he wanted her to visit him on her way back to school, but she was in the midst of such a terrible *thing* with Roger that she couldn't decide to call Yaddo until she changed trains at Springfield, and then he wasn't anywhere to be found. Besides, Craven had telephoned at her family's just when she was having a terrible fight with her mother, and she couldn't stay on the phone too long because the fight was about just such people as Donald Craven. Of course he also called some of her friends. Bunchy met him at the San Remo (or said she did), Kappy got a call from him when she was staying secretly at the Hotel Earle, Cookie ran into him at the Frick, Binky heard him in a panel discussion in June at the New School. His name was in the magazines, in articles on Baudelaire and Crashaw, in poems about the moral life, although not so often as Lucy had been led to believe. Finally, Lucy left school at the end of her sophomore year, and then Craven began to telephone her again.

Of course there had been letters between them. Lucy had written first, but their correspondence never pleased her. There was, from the very beginning, a problem in addressing him: she thought of him as "Craven," the Plauts called him "Donald," and he himself made an elaborate business of calling her "Miss Doob," as if to suggest that he had been brought up in the South and would not take advantage of her. So she wrote her letters with no salutation at all, like pages from her diary, and they were equally conscious and tentative and self-concerned. They ended abruptly, as if someone had come in while she were writing. Sometimes she didn't even sign her name, or, when she did, it was only her name, with no closing remarks. They were, when taken together, like selections from a published diary—so Craven told her; like Virginia Woolf's, for instance. Then in some of his subsequent letters he told her she was impersonal precisely out of a fear of being personal, how she couldn't distinguish between her own mind and the objects it regarded, and so on. This gave him the material for more than one letter, but Lucy took it

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as something of a rebuff and could never write easily to him again. Perhaps the difference between them, as correspondents, could be seen in the fact that Lucy wrote her letters in many revisions and first drafts, as if she were doing a paper on *Phèdre* for Plaut, while Craven threw those missives into the litter on his desk where they were lost among the bills.

Once Lucy wrote down one of her dreams for him, in those diary pages, and Craven analyzed it: she had come home one night to find her mother preparing a wedding for her; the guests, music, flowers, dress, and cake were all arranged. Only Lucy and the bridegroom were missing, and when Lucy arrived, her mother pounced. Donald Craven did not, of course, find it hard to tell Lucy just why she had dreamed this dream.

In some of their restaurant conversations, he also liked to point out how Lucy must resemble her mother (Craven had not yet met Mrs. Doob), or her father, how she figured in the family romance, how she showed the typical traits of an only child, and a girl at that. He explained why she had liked the Seventeenth Century so much, when Plaut was teaching it, and he revealed that Lucy's frequent colds came not from germs but from guilt. Donald Craven liked to have this closeness to her unconscious life. Everything Lucy said or did, her thoughts, her writings, the unspoken contorted desires he discerned in her—in short, all her manners exhibited for him the vast variety of reactions to a projective test which was himself. It was a test he had invented.

Craven got Lucy to play chess one evening. Lucy was not a good player, she couldn't prepare strategy, so Craven, fairly knowing, could keep one part of his mind on the usual Capablanca technique, and with the rest of it observe the psychology of Lucy's game. She was both aggressive and stupid, she settled for momentary gains, let herself be almost checkmated and then refused to admit it. He watched how she looked over the board, how she guarded her king, how she reacted when the game turned; he saw her blanch at the swift diagonal flights of his queen.

"You want to *get* the queen, don't you, Lucy?" he remarked, puffing on a Turkish cigarette. Then he began to speak about her mother.

Of course she didn't tell him anything, because by that time even Lucy caught on a little and thought he was attacking her.

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Later, when he made some general statements about chess, bringing in Middleton and Massinger and the Persians, making Lucy's or anyone's reactions into a large cultural fact, she was still guarded and sullen, she couldn't think of herself in this dispassionate way. It was the same whenever he referred to her as a member of the middle class—she always considered it an insult. Especially after he told her his father was an Irish policeman!

One night Lucy and Donald Craven sat for hours in a Greek restaurant because Lucy was afraid to stay at her apartment where the telephone might uncontrollably ring. Yet later, she was also afraid to go back there, so they kept having more coffee. Craven saw that Lucy couldn't keep her mind on what he was saying. Her eyes darted wildly around the place, and finally she even told him tentatively that she was afraid "she" would come down, or find them or something. There was no need to identify the person referred to. In some crazy way (even Lucy thought it was a little crazy), she thought "she" would find them in the restaurant. Lucy suggested moving to a table further from the door.

This was another demonstration for Donald Craven. There was Lucy's unconscious life spread out like an architect's drawing; there, he saw clearly, was Mrs. Doob at the entrance to Lucy's mind as well as in the dimmer corridors of it. He saw no other tenants—Mr. Doob he could not see as counting at all, and Roger Staley or Louis Meyer could hardly exist for him. Lucy was still very much the same—that night she had been terribly excited about having oysters, she'd never eaten them before!

Another night, in Craven's apartment, when Lucy said the room seemed to her very Italian, Craven assumed she was thinking of the Italian families and stores, the whole atmosphere of the Carmine Street *quartiere* where he lived. He could not know that the room was a picture straight out of Lucy's imagination, the room of an Italian intellectual, with bare white walls, no color except for the black bookcases and dull brown rug, and over everything a pale brownish mist. In the picture Lucy always put someone like Moravia frowning at a desk. When she tried to tell Craven about her idea, his eyes were veiled, and he suspected her of inauthentic improvising. She had not been to Europe, of course, so she could only agree that her impressions lacked the grandeur of validity. Craven thought he

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knew the precise limits of her rather uneducated imagination, and how her feelings generalized from particulars.

Poor Lucy sat there, bright and blond, very controlled and very nervous. She was trying to regulate her surprise and not leave herself at the mercy of sudden thoughts, some of which had already threatened her composure. For instance, Craven did not look very well, and Lucy wished she could have thought he looked wonderful. He always looked better when she just *thought* of him, worse when she actually saw him. Donald Craven was not an attractive man and had never tried to be. In fact, it was part of his equipment not to be. He was pale, and for some reason he dressed like a refugee, although he was not one, so far as Lucy knew. This curious *tournure* of his made him look like his own father planning the General Strike or the Easter Rebellion. Lucy knew that Donald Craven's true loyalties reflected other *mores*. Still, he was unkempt, in a way that Louis could never be—not dirty exactly, but somehow unappealing. There was something about the way his clothes fit him that Lucy did not like, something about the way his pants fit him.

He gave Lucy Doob some Cinzano, a cigarette, a book of Pascal to look at: she had admitted a predictable vagueness about the Jansenists. He also gave her a book on Bernini's churches. Then Craven walked over to the window and looked out at the pinkish buff twilight fading over the brown houses. It reminded him in its insidious way of an Italian sky, of rich golden afternoons, or early grotesquely-lit evenings over the brown Tiber. He was sure that in his case the Italian neighbors of Carmine Street had nothing to do with his impressions.

The small street where he lived was nothing like Piazza Navona. There were no fountains, and if he looked out the window no Borromini façade could delight his eye. Inside, in the room where he smoked and drank—and often actually worked—there was no Pozzo or Gaulli ceiling drawing him upward to ecstasy; and his desk exhibited no lapis lazuli. The furniture was all in that loose general style known as Early Village Modern. Craven did not go in for wrought iron, foam rubber, sling chairs or storage walls, which characterize a mannerist stage of the style. He had neither the money nor that particular kind of taste, which was fortunate, because the foam rubber sofa could be no match for despair—Despair which comes down like

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a fog, sending its sulphurous mists into every niche, every vault, every cupola of the mind.

So Craven was shocked—after the dinner in an Italian place, after coffee and more cigarettes, and Pascal, and then coming back to his apartment—shocked, after all the regular, ordinary things, to have Lucy draw back when he started making love to her. Lucy sat in cold suspension, caught in the dissociation of sensibility, a tight controlled figure, not at all like a Bernini.

"Has anyone ever made love to you before, Lucy?" he whispered in her ear. He kissed her in his contorted, corrupted way, and tried to shock her. He did other things. Thinking of the oysters, he was sure she'd never had anything like this before.

She said yes, but didn't elaborate. He didn't, really couldn't believe her. He preferred to think she didn't understand—that was a better view of it. He worked on the assumption that Lucy thought "making love" was like kissing to a lot of music in a filmy outdoor scene, a glowing haze. *He* would initiate her feelings, strum her into a singing harp, make her swoon like Saint Theresa awaiting the arrow of love.

He repeated his question, and again she nodded desperately. He repeated everything else. Then he argued and she tried to answer him. But she was not bright, said silly things, and, in fact, their conversation was not distinguished in the least.

"I really don't *know* you," Lucy then protested coldly, with a world of meaning forced into her words. She had begun to move away from him.

"But you'd know me better then," Craven insisted, meaning something else.

"No, I wouldn't, it would be worse. And you don't know me. You don't. You haven't any idea what I'm really like."

It was true, perhaps, in some ways. But then, that had never stopped him before. And what could be more grotesque than to think Lucy Doob presented grave epistemological problems for Donald Craven! He began to show his anger. "There's only one way to begin knowing you," he repeated, but without much charm, even of his own variety. He sensed some disruption in the perspective of their situation.

"I mean, you don't love me," Lucy said, but only after she be-

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came very formally tragic, because the strain of pride was enormous. She held her head up, and the tension of that moment gave her face some of the cold remoteness of a Bronzino lady. She had not yet begun to cry, but the whole thing was becoming *fantastic*.

At the word "love" Craven nodded with an expression of clarity in his eyes. "Love" resolved that uncanny sense of disproportion, that blurring he had felt a few minutes before. Now everything was more predictable, more symmetrical. Craven himself did not consider "love" particularly relevant; at least, not now, not so early in their affair. Later, when he became—as he knew he would—impossible, then it would be time to bring in "love," as a means of making Lucy stay, or go, or do whatever was necessary. Craven nodded only because he was reassured to see how little Lucy really had changed. He was sure now that it was a fantasy of hers that she knew what "making love" was. How else explain her behavior? The situation, indeed, was classic in its clarity.

"You're very rigid," Craven observed. "You have too much control, you repress your feelings, look what you do to yourself," he said coldly. But he could not reverse Lucy's terrible intensity, and their argument fell back into a weary grotesque silence.

What Lucy tried to say was that she didn't feel herself enchanted and she had to be. It was so very necessary to have that feeling, she thought, but difficult to explain. Craven was so much older than she was that she couldn't tell him he didn't enchant her. And there was nothing she could do, because he was not at all enchanted—*and he didn't want to be*. As she struggled with these contradictions, the drab room where they were sitting echoed with his writhing words; and Lucy heard herself described as "a cold little narcissist" entrapped by "fantasies." She was counseled to scrutinize her "boring rigidity," her "excessive rationality."

The subject of these attributes moved from the paisley-covered bed to sit in Craven's old leather chair and smoke a cigarette. There was only coldness in the Italian intellectual's room now. Naturally, there had been no "love" before, but now even that earlier peak of mutual interest had quite fallen off. The evening was now quite over for him, so he became rude, caustic, contemptuous. Such precipitate failures were unnerving to Craven, and he could sustain the belief that the failure was Lucy's only by making her sure he hated her, which he rapidly proceeded to do. She, however, thought that

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some of the evening might be salvaged by a last-minute gaiety, and, with an abrupt shift of her whole sensibility, she turned against her own pride, in what seemed an easy retreat to self-abasement. Trying to pretend that nothing had happened between Craven and herself, she was inspired again by her earlier mood of serious responsive charm. She started talking about Pascal again, not this time about the Jansenists, but of Pascal's remarks on birthdays and age. This was a poor choice, like a child idly throwing a stone and discovering the Lascaux caves; for, it made Craven reflect again on the difference between his own age and Lucy's, and on his wasted youth, his dark, irregular, unpromising future.

Even Lucy could sense something sickening in this bright conversation. She was making herself hateful: he hated her more, while she didn't like him any less, but the indifference and disgust he showed her now lent him a greater charm than he had before. Craven saw only that she was rather shallow, that he had made a mistake about her. Young girls, it seemed, even with all their guilt, were more resilient than he could ever be, or perhaps more dissociated, more, um. . . . These thoughts were dangerous, they led so quickly to the heart of Donald Craven's previous interest in Lucy, and to his own despair, that he managed to get rid of her immediately. Without taking her home.

For a whole week Lucy couldn't follow anything but the grotesque argument in her own heart. The poor girl strained to make sense of herself, and, for her, that was the point of the crisis. All she could hear were these terrible arguments, noble tragic dialogues of love and duty, passion and honor, feeling and scruple, dialogues in which the issue would always be a destruction she could not understand. For nothing was clear, all was murky, dark, cold, and hateful. Lucy had always been able to explain herself before, but now nothing worked and nothing had changed. She was just then rather involved with Louis Meyer, and now all that seemed "impossible"—but also she didn't want to *not* see Louis. Lucy was not especially attracted to Donald Craven—still, this seemed an inadequate reason. She never expected such a man to be attractive in that way. He did engage her nerves, if not her emotions, but she could not think that sufficient. What she wanted would not correspond with her emotion, what she could do was not what she wanted. She sat,

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miserable, at her window, pushing back her short blond hair, or twisting a curl on her cheek and tapping with it like a paint brush. Now so remote, and no longer possible, the relation to Craven began to shimmer almost gloriously with light and interest.

Craven had said to her once that she would write better poetry after knowing him. That was at the beginning of their acquaintance, but she remembered it still. Thinking of it, she felt like crying. Lucy sat near her desk, reading some of her recent poems, and not liking them at all. But if, before this, she stared blankly at them, now almost vindictively she threw them away. She ascribed all their faults and crudities to the absence of Craven's aegis, to Louis, say, who was not desperate at all. Flicking over the pages of her notebook, she saw no extreme gestures, no grandeur, no ecstasies. Would she ever be a bright star in the firmament of the English poets? Would she make herself remembered?

Lucy could even hear Craven sneer at her: she pictured his ravaged face, and heard her own stiff shrillness, as if Baudelaire had approached her and she primly squeaked, *"Non, monsieur, j'ai peur de la maladie."*

During the long week when she waited for Donald Craven's call, she walked in the Park every afternoon at dusk. The gray softness, the hurrying crowds, the sound of distant bells—all came over her sharply and sadly. The poor girl thought of partings, of bleak wrenching farewells, of ships sailing off to unknown lands. Lucy felt as her own all the mournful sadness in the world, and felt a part of all the helpless tragic passion. In the Park, as she watched the fountains, the plash of gentle water was far away, but she wondered why she could not have the lightness of soul, the arabesque of feeling that she felt in the water. She had struggled vainly against Craven, against herself. In his room, she had fled him; now that he was gone, she saw him, heard him everywhere. His image pursued her in the subway, on the bus, in the Park, through all the city crowds. Everything reminded her of him. Lucy saw all her past life leading to the present moment, and she was pierced with love.

The week was very long, but he never called. Then Lucy started on a wild, violent irregularity—something she would never have done before. She went downtown one afternoon, near Carmine Street, and stopped in a drugstore to telephone him. With an arrogant com-

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posure, she hoped Craven would not be home, but the twisting and straining of her heart almost choked her. When he answered, for he was unfortunately there, he sounded so friendly and cold that Lucy found her voice getting smaller and softer until Craven could barely hear her. In an elaborate formal way, Lucy asked Craven whether he was "at home" that afternoon—it was the only thing she could say, and she was thankful for this classic formula. But he, with the poise, the presence, the grandeur of Prince Pamphili, replied that he was afraid not. He didn't say, Don't try again, but he might just as well, for that was what Lucy heard. He said nothing about seeing her again. She was sure he had someone there.

Lucy managed to get herself out of the telephone booth, all steamy and hot with the cold horror of this terrible rejection. The cosmetics on glass counters, the soda fountain, the fluorescent lights, the shelves of mysterious medicines, all spoke to her of the real life that people have. And she was frightened, because what she was involved in was also life, and she hated it. As she drifted out of the drugstore, she was a prey to all the quick images of her delayed violent feeling—someone else in that dusty afternoon light, that light falling over a bottle of Cinzano, cigarettes, Pascal opened on the table, on the floor Bernini, on the white wall shadows—and then the cruel image of Craven with someone who was not Lucy and now could never be. She did not think of taking poison, but a venom of equal strength coursed through her veins, burning and chilling at once.

But this was not to be quite the end, there was an epilogue. Lucy, for no reason at all, wrote Craven a letter some months later, a long sad letter, telling him of her point of view, with all those feelings clenched on the innumerable pages in her obscure irregular handwriting. The path of her emotions was labyrinthine, and the letter ended in a strange desperate way:

". . . when you said I wasn't as poised as I used to be. Of course I didn't ask why, and all I could say to *you* was, it was true. I couldn't say what I really felt, so that's why I think you thought I was a different kind of person from what I am. You had my mother and father all figured out, so you thought you knew all about me, but that was only to control me and make me feel immature. It didn't really *matter*. Your [illegible] attitude froze up all my feeling,

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so you thought I couldn't feel anything and was just being bourgeois about Love. But you would have understood if you loved me, or if I were younger, though I'm not so very old now. But I really mean more eager.

"But all that is in the past now, because I think for everyone there is only one time or opportunity to dedicate themselves, and now as it is I feel my life is over. Even if I think you were cold, in my heart I know what horrors I am capable of, even if I couldn't pretend to you. But I couldn't explain either. So I am guilty, and this cruel image of myself is going to pursue me eternally I suppose, but you must never forget that someone lives in the world, even if it is a life-in-Death, someone who wishes to have loved you. . . ."

Craven was in Europe when the thick letter arrived in Carmine Street, where his ex-wife was staying during his absence. She opened Lucy's letter, of course, and reading through it, penciled her comments in the margins, making the revisions that would have served Lucy better. Then she sent it off by regular mail to Craven in the Via dell'Anima—who could only wonder at his great mistake. He was just then in danger of making still another one.

EPITAPH FOR A HORSEMAN

Let no one mourn his mount, upholstered bone
He rode so cruelly over bog and stone,
Log, fence and ditch in every kind of weather;
Nor glibly hint those two came down together:
A horse fell dead and cast his master down,
But by that fall their union was undone.
A broken jade we found, the rider gone,
Leaving no tokens but his cold clean gear,
Bit, reins and riding crop for friends to gather:
None but a beast's remains lie buried here.

Michael Hamburger

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LONDON LETTER

THE ENGLISH TRADITION

Mr. Goldsmith's Paris Letter in the last issue of PR drew attention to the French love of ideological casuistry. The English have been supposed the least theoretical of people, at least since Matthew Arnold, with his love of France, saddled them with the reputation a hundred years ago. And in fact, the English do not delight in the sort of casuistry Mr. Goldsmith is describing. Nonetheless, what strikes an American is the extent to which the English mind habitually meets a specific issue by reference to something which, if it has not the grand abstractness of ideology, is at least solidly a priori. This is as likely to be the traditional attitude of a class or an institution as it is to be the dogma of a social theory, but it has for an American a similar lack of immediate relevance. No doubt this all goes to show that Mr. Goldsmith and I, as Americans, have the barbarian's typical short-sightedness.

For example, when I commented to my wife the other day on what seemed to me the unostentatious dignity of an LCC housing project, a frowsty Ronald-Searle type in front of us on the bus turned around and said, "You wouldn't like it if you lived there; they keep the coal in the bathtub, those people." It made you feel like a pollster suddenly confronted by someone passionately opposed to Nicholas Biddle and the Bank of the United States. This attitude makes possible the magnificent achievements of the National Trust and the annual winter freeze-up of England's Victorian plumbing; it makes possible Mr. John Betjeman's weekly column in defense of the English landscape and the late-eighteenth-century highway system; it makes possible London's incredibly polite drivers and its country-village traffic patterns.

This love of traditional attitudes is equally evident in the political and economic realms; there too it produces results both good and bad which would be almost inconceivable in America. In February, for example, after a passionate ethical discussion in the press, Parliament set aside such trifling immediate issues as the Middle East, Cyprus, and inflation, to have a full debate on the abolition of capital punishment. Mr. Geoffrey de Freitas, the teller, was reported in *The Times* to have paused for an appreciable moment to get control of himself before he

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was able to announce the vote in favor of abolition. Not many lives, of course, will be saved by the abolition of capital punishment, but the death penalty for murder involves an ethical principle which is important to the humanitarian tradition. There is something admirable in England's deep concern for it. The same attitude showed to a somewhat more muddled purpose in the winter's abortive hullabaloo over easing the law against homosexual relations to permit them between consenting adults. The English law is sometimes applied in strange ways, as Peter Wildeblood's fine book showed, but the humanitarians got badly bogged in the arid thesis that homosexuality and adultery are similar sins.

In the economic sphere the English are, from laborer and small shopkeeper to expense-account executive, reluctant to change habitual ways of doing things on the chance of finding better ways. "Restrictive practices," as they are called, exist here on a scale which makes our feather-bedding and resale price maintenance look pitiful. With England in a desperate battle for the carrying trade, for instance, the union keeps two huge new unloaders out of operation for months arguing against an efficient reduction of the crews from twelve to eight men, and the losses from which-union-drills-what-holes disputes is staggering. When the small shopkeeper lacks (as he frequently does) what the customer wants, he is likely to say with cheerful but purely theoretical interest, "You know, a great many people ask me for that." The Tyre Manufacturers' Conference explains that the price of tires is uniform in England, not because prices are fixed, but because any manufacturer who charges less will be thought to produce an inferior tire. As *The Spectator*—generally considered to represent a genteel anarchism—remarked, if this is true, the whole argument for competition and free enterprise disappears. With such arguments, nonetheless, the industrialists have emasculated the new anti-monopoly bill.

The complications created by the general acceptance of a "class" wage structure are also characteristic. For some time now the printers have been "working to rule" (a form of the slowdown). They are doing so because they want their present take (made possible by an ingenious use of "overtime") made their regular wage. The point of this is not to get more money but to get an official wage which will clearly indicate their status as "craftsmen." Similarly, the demonstration badly paid secondary-school teachers gave recently actually endangered their chances of increased salaries by an outburst in defense of their "professional" status (much stimulated, it must be added, by the minister, Sir David Eccles, who was stupid enough to tell them they were "putting on a song and dance").

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Politically, Labour is likely to sound more interested in theory than the Conservatives, partly because Sir Anthony Eden shows his patriotism, as Malcolm Muggeridge recently put it, by "boring for England," whereas Mr. Bevan shows his by denouncing his Labour colleagues as bad socialists and—having entered and lost contests for both the leadership and the deputy-leadership of his party—by declaring that he is above leading a party so ideologically ill-behaved (he rose to positively Gaullist heights later by saying, "I am not interested in being the leader of any party, but merely in being a leader"). But—as the tactics of Mr. Butler and Mr. Macmillan in dealing with inflation have shown—the Conservatives are more devoted to their traditions than Sir Anthony's clichés would suggest, and Labour as a whole is not nearly so preoccupied with socialist theology as Mr. Bevan.

Concern for customary attitudes could be illustrated in all the affairs, trivial or serious, which have occupied attention in the last months. For instance, during Princess Margaret's trouble, *The Times* directed an editorial at her which sounded like a letter from some senile uncle devoted in a muddle-headed way to preserving the family honor; it went on about duty and the English people's deep disapproval of the innocent parties to divorces, feelings which are largely restricted to *The Times* (which is not to say that people were not relieved when Princess Margaret decided not to marry Group Captain Townsend). The tabloids, with their incredible bad taste—large cuts of Townsend slipping into a side door of Clarence House and the like—at least recognized that Princess Margaret was a human being, and that was a great relief from *The Times*. "Royal soap opera," Muggeridge called the press's view of the affair.

The weeklies, which are more informal and much more thoughtful than their American counterparts, have characteristically stirred up the greatest excitement by raising moral questions about past events. Was the notorious Casement diary, which had so much to do with quieting Casement's supporters when he was tried during the First World War, a forgery? (The Irish of course weighed in on this one in a big way.) Did Mr. Robert Blake in his life of Bonar Law depend too exclusively on Lord Beaverbrook's evidence in telling a story unfavorable to Asquith, or is Lady Violet Bonham Carter, for all her arrogance and her bad manners, right about what happened? And does Mr. Blake's book show that Christ Church scholarship is "whitewashing," because Christ Church is part of that reincarnation of the Cliveden set, "The Establishment"—a sinister old-ruling-class clique which tries to run England from the seclusion of Oxford colleges, country houses, and London clubs?

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On current issues, the same habits of mind show themselves, immensely to England's credit, in the debate on Burgess and Maclean, where even Sir Anthony was given dignity by the traditional English grasp of the moral dangers of an all-out security program (though no one quite faced up to the question of why the Foreign Office acted like a college fraternity in protecting for so long these two demoralized people). For the same reason an effective outcry greeted the government's suggestion that it might jam the Athens radio—which it is now doing—to keep the virulent Greek propaganda out of Cyprus. The English may have to endure a government which has blundered in Cyprus as if it were a Republican administration dealing with a banana republic. But during the House's debate on Cyprus, even Mr. Bevan was diverted from his curious argument that the real cause of the trouble was American oil companies, by his indignation at this jamming of the Athens broadcasts.

As befits one of the country's intellectual centers, Oxford managed to put on a display of more nearly ideological passion over the contest for the professorship of poetry, but the conflicting ideologies were characteristically vintage. Dr. Enid Starkie, who led the Auden forces, seems to be a cross between Amy Lowell and Jim Farley—a cigar-smoker and a formidable political manager who was responsible for C. Day Lewis' victory over C. S. Lewis five years ago. Her campaign was a nostalgic echo of the most advanced thinking of the '30s. The right-wing opposition was characteristically late into the field with its candidate, Sir Harold Nicolson, and characteristically ill-organized. Its leader was Mr. John Sparrow, apparently still keeping warm the opinions of modern poetry which he expressed with such muddled vehemence in the '30s. He was formidably supported by Sir Maurice Bowra and a considerable number of people with an inclination to mutter "reactionary" questions about Mr. Auden's whereabouts during the last war. As the MA's, properly gowned, approached the Convocation House to vote, they were greeted by a sign which the undergraduates had painted on the wall of All Souls (of which Mr. Sparrow is Warden): "Auden for Proff." But even this bold resort to radical spelling did not sway quite enough of them, and Mr. Auden triumphed over Sir Harold by twenty-four votes, with Mr. Knight drawing off a solid block of ninety-one "protest votes."

I am quite incompetent to judge the fine arts, but the rankest amateur was bound to have his eyes knocked out by the Royal Academy's exhibition of English Taste in the Eighteenth Century, a perfectly

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selected and beautifully arranged tribute to the traditional age of taste, with its exquisite furniture, its enchanting rococo painting, its marvelous portrait busts (one especially haunting Roubiliac of Pope), and its dedicated domestic frivolity of Chinoiserie and Gothic. In contrast to this exhibition was the Tate's display of Modern Art in the United States. Of it, Basil Taylor of the Royal College of Art said, "These pictures, particularly the examples of Pollock, de Kooning, Kline, Rothko and Still, have great technical accomplishment and vitality and considerable formal interest. . . . They represent the logical end of romantic 'sincerity' but . . . as the expression of personality they bear the same relation to man as the lines inscribed by a seismograph to an earthquake; for all their size, energy, assurance, they seem to me extraordinarily slight." Here surely speaks—perhaps with complete justice—the domestic humanism which is the best of England's traditionalism.

This humanism stands out with equal firmness against the nostalgic aristocratic attitude into which Mr. Evelyn Waugh has retired (he makes occasional sorties to fight for his conviction that Alfred Duggan and P. G. Wodehouse are great writers), against the tired "intelligence" which led *Encounter* to devote itself this winter to the snobberies of English diction which fascinate people like Nancy Mitford (U and non-U—the shorthand for upper-class and non-upper-class diction—have themselves become a part of the defining diction of the "intelligent"), and against the romantic "sincerity" of which Dylan Thomas was the symbol if not the example. Not long ago, in *The Observer,* Philip Oakes described what he called "The New Style of Heroes" as follows:

> Born: Coketown, 1925. Parents: lower middle-class. Educated: Local council school, grammar school and university (after three years military service). Married. One or two children. Occupation: Civil Servant/journalist/lecturer/minor executive. Politics: neutralist. . . . Enthusiasms: George Orwell, jazz, Dr. Leavis, old cars. Antipathies: Dylan Thomas, provincial culture, European novelists.

This is of course the hero of people like John Wain, Kingsley Amis, and William Cooper, who have written a considerable number of the interesting novels of the last few years and produce a good deal of the best journalism.

Of the two poets who have recently created a stir, the first, Philip Larkin (*The Less Deceived*), is closely associated with this group and the second—yet another Welshman named Thomas—R. S. Thomas (*Song at the Year's Turning*), shares much of their attitude, though his background is different. Thomas is very impressive, both in his own

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right and in his startling contrast to Dylan Thomas. ("We've nothing vast to offer you, no deserts/ Except the waste of thought/ Forming from mind erosion.") It looks as if the mood represented by these writers has taken over, for the writers of the '30s like Spender and Lehmann are drifting into reminiscence and Mr. Graham Greene is busy bucking for his Nobel Prize with comic-strip portraits of subhuman "quiet Americans" set in contrast to favorable portraits of himself as a murdering good European.

Perhaps it is some mistaken by-product of this new mood which makes London theatrical audiences enthusiastic about the streamlined tin-pan-alley sentimentality of American musical comedies. There is, incidentally, one really funny review in London, Robert Dhéry's *La Plume de ma Tante,* which reaches its climax when an uproarious parody of a strip-tease finds the stage manager trying to argue the artiste into removing a set of heavy winter underwear; when she finally gets his point, she gives the audience a startled glance, throws her hands in the air, and cries, "They must be crazy!"

The inexplicable enthusiasm for American musicals apart, the London theater is characteristically English. Its prices are reasonable, its tickets easy to get, its theaters conveniently located; but its décor is unretouched Victorian and its heating something left over from Prinny's heyday. Its acting is of very high quality and its music usually a tape-recording faintly heard behind the clatter of static emitted by a neurotic loudspeaker. Its best work consists of a great deal of Shakespeare and a small amount of excellent experimental stuff. The Peter Brook *Hamlet* with Paul Scofield, which was received with supreme politeness in Moscow last fall, is very popular. Scofield is the nearest thing to John Barrymore since the '20s. He is exceedingly handsome, has a magnificent though mannered voice, and sends his personality rolling out over the audience in waves. Unfortunately he plays *Hamlet* as if he had it mixed up with *Rebel without a Cause*. The Old Vic's Shakespeare productions are conventional and their director, Michael Benthall, delights in meaningless pauses and sharply contrasted shouts and murmurs, but the company has some fine actors and there is a good deal to be said for productions of Shakespeare in which the producer is not busy imposing some silly "original" interpretation of his own on the play. The Old Vic is a great comfort after John Gielgud's foam-rubber *Lear* where the ludicrous production and Gielgud's performance, with its insistence that Lear is hopelessly senile, gave Shakespeare's play as tough a fight to survive as it can ever have faced.

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Apart from these tributes to tradition, there have been two interesting experiments. The first is Samuel Beckett's Joycean *Waiting for Godot*. Beautifully written, it is only saved from being a nihilistic Saroyan bore by the magnificent acting of Hugh Burden. It is hard to imagine the announced cast's making it go in New York. The second is *Darkling Child,* a verse play—his first—by the young American poet W. S. Merwin. It has one or two soft spots, but is as a whole written with real dramatic force. Mr. Kenneth Tynan, who reviews for *The Observer,* thought that, compared to Tennessee Williams' "exquisite play," it was Icarus to Mercury. I expect this comparison was not meant to remind us of Mercury's dubious moral reputation, but if it does, it gives us a very fair measure of the two plays.

This is the intellectual world over which broods the slightly grubby greatness of London, with its endless stretches of the grimy Victorian housing that so outraged H. G. Wells (but has a charm of its own now), its Wren churches and Nash crescents, its parks and garden, and its universal kindness. For London, unlike New York, is a city self-possessed.

Arthur Mizener

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Elizabeth Hardwick

AMERICA AND DYLAN THOMAS

He died, grotesquely like Valentino, with mysterious, weeping women at his bedside. His last months, his final agonies, his utterly woeful end were a sordid and spectacular drama of broken hearts, angry wives, irritable doctors, frantic bystanders, rumors and misunderstandings, neglect and murderous permissiveness. The people near him visited indignities upon themselves, upon him, upon others. There seems to have been a certain amount of competition at the bedside, assertions of obscure priority. The honors were more and more vague, confused by the ghastly, suffering needs of this broken host and by his final impersonality. No one seems to have felt his wife and children had any divine rights but that they, too, had each day to earn their place on the open market in the appalling contest of Thomas's last years. Could it have happened quite this way in England? Were his last years there quite as frenzied and unhealthy as his journeys to America? He was one of ours, in a way, and he came back here to die with a terrible and fabulous rightness. (Not ours, of course, in his talents, his work, his joys, but ours in his sufferings, his longings, his demands.) "Severe alcoholic insult to the brain," the doctors said.

Dylan Thomas was loved and respected abroad, but he was literally *adored* in America. Adored, too, with a queer note of fantasy, a baffled, psychic force that went beyond his superb accomplishments as a poet, his wit, amazing and delightful at all times, his immense abilities on the public platform. He was first-rate: one need not be ashamed to serve him or to pursue him. He was also, and perhaps this was more important to some of his admirers, doomed, damned, whatever you will, undeniably suffering and living in the extremest reaches of experience. As Eliot observed about Byron: after the theatricalism, the posing, the scandals, you had to come back to the fact that Byron was, nevertheless, genuinely disreputable. And so it was with Thomas. Behind his drinking, his bad behavior, his infidelities, his outrageousness, there was always his real doom. His condition was clearly critical. It couldn't go on much longer.

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There was a certain element of drama in Thomas's readings that had nothing to do with his extraordinary powers. His story preceded him wherever he went; the perverse publicity somehow reached every town before he did and so the drama of his visit started before he arrived. Would he, first of all, really make it? (Awful if he didn't, with the tickets sold, hall hired, cocktail canapes made in advance.) Would he arrive only to break down on the stage? Would some dismaying scene take place at the faculty party? Would he be offensive, violent, obscene? These were alarming and yet exciting possibilities. Here, at last, was a poet in the grand, romantic style, a wild and inspired spirit not built for comfortable ways. He could be allowed anything. They would give him more drinks when he was dying of drink; they would let him spit in the eternal eye of the eternal head of the department, pinch the eternal faculty wife, insult the dull, the ambitious, the rich, tell obscene stories, use four-letter words. It did not make any difference. Thomas was acknowledged, unconsciously perhaps, to be beyond judgment, to be already living a tragic biography, nearing some certain fatality.

And he could make all the passes he chose, have all the love affairs, since the unspoken admission always was that he was doomed, profoundly ill, living as a character in a book, and his true love, beyond all others at this time, was alcohol. Yet so powerful and beguiling was his image—the image of a self-destroying, dying young poet of genius—that he aroused the most sacrificial longings in women. He had lost his looks, he was disorganized to a degree beyond belief, he had a wife and children in genuine need, and yet young ladies *felt* they had fallen in love with him. They fought over him; they nursed him while he retched and suffered and had delirium; they stayed up all night with him and yet went to their jobs the next morning. One girl bought cowboy suits for his children. Enormous mental, moral and physical adjustments were necessary to those who would be the companions of this restless, frantic man. The girls were up to it—it was not a hardship, but a privilege.

Apparently no one felt envious of Thomas or bitter about the attention he received. Even here he was an interesting exception. The explanation for the generosity lay first of all in the beauty and importance of his verse: this circumstance was the plain ground from which the elaborate and peculiar flowering of Thomas's American experience sprang. The madness of the infatuated is, after all, just an exaggeration of the reasonable assent of the discriminating. And so Thomas's personal

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greatness began it all, and the urgency of his drinking, his uncontrollable destructiveness seemed to add what was needed beyond his talents. He was both a success and a failure in a way we find particularly appealing. What he represented in the vividness of his success and failure was real and of irresistible power to certain art-conscious Americans. He had everything and "threw it all away." In him sophisticated schoolteachers, bright young girls, restless wives, bohemians, patrons and patronesses, found a poet they could love. He was not conservative, not snobbish, not middle-class, not alarmingly intellectual; he was a wild genius who needed caring for. And he was in a pattern we can recognize all too easily—the charming young man of great gifts, willfully going down to ruin. He was Hart Crane, Poe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, the stuff of which history is made, and also, unexpectedly, something of a great actor; indeed he was actually a great actor in a time when the literary style runs to the scholarly and the clerical. He satisfied a longing for the extreme. He was incorrigible and you never knew what he might do. He was fantastically picturesque. His Anglo-Welsh accent delighted everyone who heard it. Every college girl had her Dylan Thomas anecdote and it was usually scandalous, since he had a pronounced gift for that. His fees were exceeded only by the Sitwells, *tous les deux,* and by Eliot. His drinking had made him, at least superficially, as available as a man running for office. Everyone knew him, heard him, drank with him, nursed him. He was both immoderately available and, in the deepest sense, utterly unavailable too. His extraordinary gregariousness was a sign of his extremity. He knew everyone in the world, but for a long time he had perhaps been unable to know anyone. Oddly enough, at the end Thomas was more "fashionable" than he had ever been in his happier days. Even excess, carried off with so great a degree of authenticity and compulsiveness, has a kind of *chic.*

John Malcolm Brinnin's book, *Dylan Thomas in America,*[1] has been praised by some critics, but many others have felt a good deal of moral annoyance about the work. They have found Brinnin a false friend, and they have decided his material might better have gone unpublished. Thomas's widow was much disturbed by the "intimate journal" and, one hears, has written a book-length "answer" to it. It seems unfair to accuse Brinnin of treachery or of the commercial exploitation of his friendship with Thomas—the most astonishing aspect

1 *Atlantic Monthly Press-Little Brown. $4.00.*

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of his record is just the wild and limitless nature of his devotion to his subject. It has, at times, almost the character of an hallucination.

"The sharpest scrutiny is the condition of enduring fame," Froude said as he set out to tell all he knew about Carlyle. This is the dominion of history and scholarship. And yet Brinnin's book does not seem to be a product of the historical impulse as we usually think of it. His journal is truly an obsessive document and is most unusual for that reason. It is not easy to think of anything else quite like it, anything one might justly compare it with. His commitment to his subject is of such an overwhelming degree that he cannot leave out anything. He treats Dylan Thomas as a great force of nature and would no more omit an infidelity or a hangover than a weatherman would suppress the news of an ugly storm. In certain respects, the book is not a piece of composition at all, but is rather the living moment with its repetitions, its naïveté, its peculiar acceptance of and compulsive attachment to every detail of Thomas's sad existence. It is as flat and true as a calendar. As a record, it is oddly open and marked by a helpless, uncomfortable fascination on Brinnin's part. For him Thomas was an addiction. Having once taken on the friendship, Brinnin was trapped, spell-bound, enlisted in a peculiar mission. Here are sentences from the early pages of the journal which tell of Thomas's first American visit: "He slept, breathing heavily, as I fingered through some English magazines he had brought with him, and watched the early lights of Manhattan come on through the sleet. As I contemplated Dylan's deep sleep, I tried first to comprehend and then to accept the quality (it was too early to know the dimensions) of my assignment . . . no one term would serve to define a relationship which had overwhelmed my expectations and already forced upon me a personal concern that was constantly puzzled, increasingly solicitous and, I knew well by now, impossible to escape."

Although Brinnin was the business agent for Thomas's American performances, his presence is due, not to business concerns, but to the notion of a mysterious and compelling destiny, a fatigued and yet somehow compulsory attendance. The "too late now to turn back" theme is heard again and again. "I knew that, above all now, I wanted to take care of him. . . . Just as certainly, I knew that I wanted to get rid of him, to save myself from having to be party to his self-devouring miseries and to forestall any further waiting upon his inevitable collapses." Reading such passages, you are reminded of the fatal commitments in Poe's work, of those nightmares of the irresistible and irrational involvement. Even Thomas's first visit was anticipated by Brinnin as

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a gloomy necessity; he approached the arrival with a painful and helpless alarm, and yet with a feeling of the inevitable. The commitment was of a quality impossible to analyze. It went beyond any joy that might or might not be found in Thomas's company, beyond mutual interests and personal affinity. It was so deep and so compelling that despair was its natural mood. Because of the fabulous difficulty of Thomas's character, this mood of despair seems more appropriate than the carousing, robust tone some others fall into when they talk of Thomas. In Brinnin's book it is always, in feeling at least, the dead, anguished middle of a drunken night. The despair, the wonder and the helplessness start the book and lead up to the grim, apoplectic end. There is no pretense that it was fun. It was maddening, exhausting, but there it was. And after Thomas died there was no release from the strain because the book had to be written, fulfilled with the same dogged, tired fascination the author felt in the case of the actual events. The self-effacement of the style seems a carry-over from the manner one adopts when he sits, sober, exhausted and anxious, with a drunken friend whose outbursts and ravings he is afraid of. The lists of guests at a party, the lecture dates, the financial details—the reader takes these in nervously, flatly, with the sense of a strange duty being honored. The girls, the quarrels, the summers and winters, the retchings, the humiliations, the heights and the depths—they are all presented in the same gray, aching tone. The writing of the book seems to have been the same sort of hallucinated task as the planning of the lecture tours. There is a unique concentration upon the elemental, upon how much Thomas slept, how much he could be made to eat, upon the momentary predicaments. Of character analysis or literary analysis, there is very little. This is the terrifying breath of life, but of a life without words. "He was ill and downcast again in the morning. . . ." "We broke our trip to Connecticut by a stop in Sturbridge, to drink ale before the wood-burning fireplace of an old inn, and arrived at the University just in time to spend an informal hour with the fourteen students of my graduate seminar." To spend *an hour* with the *fourteen* students! One does not know what to make of the inclusion of so much fact and figure. Thomas's conversation, so rare and beautiful, is not captured at all. The record is of another kind. It is certainly bemused and depressed and yet it is outlandishly successful as a picture of the prosaic circumstances of some months in a dramatic life.

Near the end: "There he ate an enormous dinner—a dinner which, in the course of events, was to be his last full meal." Dylan Thomas

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died in St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City. His death was miserable and before he passed into the final coma he had delirium tremens, horrors, agonies, desire for death, and nearly every physical and mental pain one can imagine. Brinnin does not try to render the great denouement, but again it is, in an odd and indefinable fashion, rendered by the dazed and peculiarly accurate and endless detail. "His face was wan and expressionless, his eyes half-opening for moments at a time, his body inert." The actual death: "Dylan was pale and blue, his eyes no longer blindly searching but calm, shut, and ineffably at peace. When I took his feet in my hand all warmth was gone. . . ." The final line of the record does fly upward in intention, but it is more clumsy, more earthbound than all of the repetitive detail of all the thousands of preceding lines and it does not even seem true. "Now, as always, where Dylan was, there were no tears at all."

Could it have happened quite this way in England? It is an unhappy circumstance for us that Thomas should have died here, far from his family, far from the scenes he had lived in and written about. The maniacal permissiveness and submissiveness of American friends might, for all we know, have actually shortened Thomas's life, although he was ill and driven in England too. But there was a certain amount of poison in our good will. In the acceptance of his tragic condition there was a good deal of indifference and self-deception. The puzzling contentiousness and the ugly competition remain coldly in our mind. According to Brinnin, Thomas made these frantic flights to America because of his "conviction that his creative powers were failing, that his great work was finished." He feared he was "without the creative resources to maintain and expand his position." The financial benefit was destroyed by the familiar condition of our economic life: he spent every penny he made just as soon as he had it in his hands. His wife and his mother wanted him to stay at home *in order* to earn a living for his family. Furthermore Caitlin Thomas felt he had been "spoiled" in America, that he came here for "flattery, idleness and infidelity." Perhaps one shouldn't read too much between the lines, but it is hard not to get the idea that Thomas's American friends, with a cynical show of piety, treated these accusations and feelings as outrageous. They, sinking sensuously into their own suspicious pity, flattered and allowed and encouraged right to the brink of the grave.

In England we have Brinnin's own observation that the deference shown to Thomas was of a quieter, less unreal and unbalancing sort.

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It might almost have passed for a lack of interest. In a London pub with Thomas, Brinnin was impressed that the poet was, for once, "not the object of everyone's attention." Here in America the approbation was extreme, the notice sometimes hysterical, the pace killing. The cost of these trips was "disproportionate to the rewards." The trip before the last one was felt to be "too exhausting to contemplate," and still it was not only contemplated, it was arranged, it happened, and was followed by an unbelievable another, the last of the three. In these tours Thomas seems like nothing so much as a man in the films, addressing the audience cheerfully, but with a gun in his back. It was a ghastly affair, preserved faithfully and grimly by Brinnin. There is an element in this story of ritual and fantasy, a phantasmagoria of pain and splendor, of talent and untimely death. And there is something else: the sober and dreary fact of the decline of our literary life, its thinness and fatigue. From this Thomas was, to many, a brief reprieve.

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BOOKS

IDEAS OF ORDER

THE LION AND THE HONEYCOMB. By R. P. Blackmur. Harcourt, Brace. $5.00.

R. P. Blackmur's new volume of essays, *The Lion and the Honeycomb,* provides a welcome opportunity to check on an impression derived from a somewhat haphazard reading of the literary magazines. This impression is that the American "New Criticism," now that it has begun to ossify into an intransigent dogma at the hands of the epigones, is undergoing an admirable revision in the writings of some of its original proponents. And this impression is reinforced, not only by Mr. Blackmur's book, but also by the recent essays of John Crowe Ransom collected in the Knopf paperback devoted to Ransom's work (*Poems and Essays*).[1] Indeed, if we compare these two books, we become aware of a charming and amusing mock-ballet of mutual eyebrow-raising and mildly astonished admonition on the part of these two pioneers of the New Criticism.

The title essay of Mr. Blackmur's book, dated 1951, mentions Mr. Ransom's well-known essay on Milton's *Lycidas*—and does so to point out a limitation of Mr. Ransom's critical approach. Mr. Ransom dealt excellently with the rhetoric (the formal values) of Milton's poem, Mr. Blackmur says, but did not touch those matters in the poem that the rhetoric dealt with—"the theology and politics and personal experience which are the intellectual and poetic subject of the poem." Now in Mr. Ransom's volume we have a review of Mr. Blackmur's earlier collection of essays, *Language as Gesture,* which appeared in 1953. Mr. Ransom rightly praises these essays as the strongest, sharpest and most perceptive criticism yet written on the major modern poets; if any modern criticism stands a chance of becoming classical, certainly it is these essays of Mr. Blackmur. But then Mr. Ransom gently reproaches his friend Mr. Blackmur with a regrettable limitation of his critical approach. What is this limitation? Why, a too exclusive concentration on formal values and a neglect of the "substantive" ones which, Mr. Ransom reminds Mr. Blackmur, are contained not only in the novel but also in poetry.

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This little interchange should resolve any doubts as to where the New Criticism is going. Quite clearly, if these opinions of both Mr. Ransom and Mr. Blackmur are taken seriously, it is going to rejoin the main body of scholarship and literary history from which it departed so unceremoniously not very long ago. A number of the essays in the present book deal with the necessity of such a reintegration, but they also make amply clear that this feeling of necessity is not based on either repentance or renegation:—nor should it be. The New Criticism performed its vital historical task of acclimating modern poetry and re-evaluating the historical style most closely related to it (the English Metaphysicals); whatever its own ideological vagaries, it had the effect of defending the values of art and literature against the obtuseness of the Positivists, the stuffiness of the Humanists, and the opportunism of the Marxists; it has nothing to reproach itself for except the exaggerations and overemphases inevitable in advancing and defending a new point of view. And some of its most eminent representatives, with a spiritual resiliency that cannot be too highly praised, are now trying to overcome even this deficiency. One should certainly keep this effort in mind when reading the more enthusiastic extravagances of the disciples of the New Criticism, who, as in all such cases, accept its principles as gospel because they have not had the sobering experience of thinking them out for themselves.

What Mr. Blackmur now advocates, in his title essay, is a fusion of Coleridge and Aristotle—these names being taken as marking out in bold relief two general critical tendencies. Coleridge stands for all the criticism devoted to the psychology of imagination as it applies "to the behavior of words and . . . the attributes of imagination in words"; Aristotle for all that is contained in the idea of *mimesis,* which applies not to words "but to the behavior of the things indicated by the words." These latter are the "substantive" values that both Mr. Blackmur and Mr. Ransom wish to include again in their critical purview; it is not only rhetoric, Mr. Blackmur says, but all the modes of the mind—dialectic and poetic as well as rhetoric—that the critic must handle in the art work.

Although Mr. Blackmur remarks in passing that his own early work also falls a victim to the strictures he now makes against rhetoric, the fact is that Mr. Blackmur himself was always one of the least dogmatic of the New Critics. It is true that over ten years ago, in his memorable essay on "A Critic's Job of Work," Mr. Blackmur spoke of his own approach to literature as being through the study of "technique." But he immediately added that it was not only technique on the plane of

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words or of "intellectual and emotional patterns"; it was also in the sense "that there is a technique of securing and arranging and representing a fundamental view of life." In reality, then, Mr. Blackmur's ideas about criticism have changed far less radically than might be thought at first sight; but the very fact that he felt called upon in the past to stretch the meaning of the word "technique" shows where his emphasis lay. What we have now is a shift in Mr. Blackmur's emphasis, and in his critical practice as well, from the technique of representing a fundamental sense of life to the significance of this sense of life itself.

Mr. Blackmur is not a writer whose ideas can be facilely summarized for analysis and criticism. He has an idiosyncratic or (to use a favorite word of his own) a tykish sort of mind, which goes at subjects in odd and unexpected ways; and Mr. Blackmur expresses himself in a remarkable style increasingly influenced by the later Henry James—a style that appears to translate his thoughts into ideated sensations rather than into concepts. Indeed, the extraordinary felicity of Mr. Blackmur's criticism of poetry comes from this proximity of his style to its subject matter. Not that Mr. Blackmur is an Impressionist critic like Pater, who uses his style solely to convey his personal sensations about the work of art. Rather, Mr. Blackmur is able to evoke in an unparalleled fashion the sensations of the experience contained in the poem itself, at a remove where these sensations become articulate without being abstract. This style has its disadvantages where, as often in *The Lion and the Honeycomb,* Mr. Blackmur deals with subjects that require conceptual clarity and intellectual precision; and the sibylline quality of Mr. Blackmur's prose has, if anything, tended to increase rather than to diminish in recent years. But Mr. Blackmur is so original a mind and so striking a sensibility that his work almost always repays the amount of work it requires. And since, in *The Lion and the Honeycomb,* a good deal of what Mr. Blackmur has to say revolves around his term "the symbolic imagination," perhaps the best way to find a path through his essays is to try and clarify the meaning of this phrase.

No reader of Mr. Blackmur can fail to have been struck by the frequency with which he cites T. S. Eliot's answer to Paul Elmer More. The latter had remarked on the contradiction between Eliot's praise of tradition in his criticism and the stylistic radicalism of his poetry. In critical prose, Eliot replied in *After Strange Gods,* one can legitimately be concerned with ideals, while in poetry one had to deal with actuality. This is, of course, one of Eliot's typical paradoxical inversions of Romantic doctrine; but Mr. Blackmur often prefers to take

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his paradoxes straight, and he accepted this idea of Eliot's at face value. There is an excellent study of Eliot's criticism in *The Lion and the Honeycomb,* and, though this passage is not cited, Mr. Blackmur offers a gloss on it just the same. Eliot, he writes, "excluded thought *as such* from poetry and said that poetry dealt with the experience or feeling of the thought which might or might not—probably *not*—have been the poet's thought." Poetry, in other words, deals with the actual because it deals with thought so far as it comes alive as experience or feeling; critical prose can express abstract ideas as ideals, independently of their emotional actuality.

How seriously Mr. Blackmur took this notion is revealed all through the essays in *Language as Gesture.* Time and again he reiterates that he is not interested in the ideas contained in poetry for their own sake; he is only concerned with the amount of experience and feeling that the poet is able to actualize *through* these ideas. To make this point clearer, Mr. Blackmur distinguished between a literal and an imaginative approach to ideas—much in the manner of Santayana, whose benignly skeptical tolerance of dogmatism pervasively colors the mood of Mr. Blackmur's mind. Whether or not a writer like Eliot accepted the doctrines in his work (i.e., Christianity) as literally true, Mr. Blackmur never had to bother about discussing these doctrines in abstract terms; his focus was always on the imaginative use of doctrine in the work of art. "Our labor," he wrote, speaking of literary critics, "is to recapture the imaginative burden and avoid the literal like death."

In *Language as Gesture,* this imaginative approach to doctrine is still used largely as a critical working principle. Its chief function was to make clear Mr. Blackmur's determination not to fall into the error of various kinds of ideological critics, who analyzed and evaluated literature in terms of their agreement or disagreement with the ideas that could be abstracted from the work. But it is revealing to see Mr. Blackmur generalizing this imaginative approach, and applying it, not only to literature, but to all attempts to interpret the meaning of experience. In "A Critic's Job of Work," he praises the skepticism and dramatic irony of the early Plato and Montaigne because neither wishes to be fixed in any doctrine; and Mr. Blackmur's sympathy, it is clear, stems from his own facility in imaginatively entering any framework of ideas without feeling obliged to come to terms with it literally as doctrine. Even more, Mr. Blackmur begins to feel the tendency of thought to take *itself* seriously, its insistence on being literal rather than imaginative, as a tragic limitation inherent in all doctrine. "Thought is a beacon not a life-raft," he writes somewhat fancifully, "and to

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confuse the functions is tragic. The tragic character of thought—as any perspective will show—is that it takes a rigid mold too soon; chooses destiny like a Calvinist, in infancy, instead of waiting slowly for old age." Any perspective thus becomes tragic when, instead of being used to illuminate some particular area of experience, it is clung to desperately as an absolute and literal truth.

This observation on the tragic character of thought is only an incidental remark in *Language as Gesture*. But in *The Lion and the Honeycomb* this idea, or rather a remarkable efflorescence of this idea, moves into the center of Mr. Blackmur's critical preoccupations; and in essays like those on Henry Adams, T. E. Lawrence and Irving Babbitt, we can see how Mr. Blackmur has magnified this critical working principle into a metaphysical dialectic. "To think straight," Mr. Blackmur writes, "you must overshoot your mark"—which means that you must take your doctrine literally for the whole truth while, at best, it can never be more than a partial version of the truth. Every perspective is then necessarily tragic when pushed to its limits, for at these limits "reason falters and becomes abstract, or faith fails and pretends to be absolute." Each perspective is thus like the hero in Hegel's theory of tragedy (to which Mr. Blackmur's dialectic bears an intriguing resemblance), asserting its partial truth as absolute and being destroyed in the very act of taking itself as omnipotent.

Under various guises, and with constantly shifting terms, this dialectic now provides the deepest driving force of Mr. Blackmur's cogitations. Adams, as Mr. Blackmur depicts him, had the rare value of pursuing his quest for an ultimate perspective on experience and knowing the necessity for its final failure. Irving Babbitt imposed and asserted an abstract intellectual perspective whose blindness and inflexible dogmatism was its own refutation. T. E. Lawrence, the most complex case of all, did not assert any perspective as absolute but rather, as Mr. Blackmur sees him, the absence of *all* perspective; and he forced himself to the limits of degradation in an effort to achieve some sort of affirmation through denial and self-nullification. In each case the dialectic between unity and chaos, or order and disorder, or orthodoxy and heresy, controls the framework of Mr. Blackmur's reflections. And the sharp edge of his criticism is inserted at the point where he senses an imbalance between his two terms—a failure of orthodoxy to make room for and absorb heresy, or a failure of chaos to keep alive some positive ideal of order.

Once we have grasped the nature of Mr. Blackmur's dialectic, the function and the value that he attributes to the symbolic imagination

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becomes almost self-explanatory. What Mr. Blackmur wants, what the internal logic of his sensibility impels him to postulate, is a dialectical balance that maintains the proper relationship between his two terms; and in the essay on Babbitt, he defines "the religious imagination" in a manner that explains what this kind of relationship must be. "It is only the religious imagination," he writes, "which has the advantage of including the traditional standards of life along with a minute knowledge of its immediate experience; hence it commonly keeps, along with its principles, escape from them through intercession, repentance, sacrifice, grace, as forms of behavior. . . ." In other words, the religious imagination creates an order that does not exclude disorder or a unity that does not exclude chaos. But since for Mr. Blackmur, as he has made clear on a number of occasions, the religious imagination is no longer viable, he remarks in the Babbitt essay "that it is both necessary and possible that we make a secular equivalent of the religious imagination." This is precisely the purpose for which Mr. Blackmur has invented his symbolic imagination, operating through art and primarily through literature. The symbolic imagination is the secular equivalent of a religious imagination that has become moribund; it embodies and actualizes the same sense of life as a dialectical opposition whose extremes do not exclude but interact on each other.

It is in terms of the symbolic imagination, then, that Mr. Blackmur writes his intellectual biographies; and this is what gives them their unmistakable metaphysical cast. For what Mr. Blackmur does is to stylize his material so that the conflicts of his subject are ultimately seen as some local and historical incarnation of his dialectic. Nothing quite like this sort of criticism has been written in English since Emerson's *Representative Men*; perhaps its closest modern analogue is Nietzsche's idea of "monumental" history—the kind of history that Nietzsche himself wrote when, in *The Birth of Tragedy,* he turned the figure of Socrates into a symbol of the eye of Reason under whose ironic scrutiny Greek tragedy withered and died. The great merits of this approach are that it focuses on elements of enduring cultural interest, and that it leaves ample scope for poetic and imaginative insight in historical interpretation. These merits are fully evident in Mr. Blackmur's remarkable studies, written with incomparable verbal *élan* and with an unerring eye for the symbolic detail and the revelatory citation. Its chief danger is that of turning historical experience into a kind of mythology, of making history too transparent, as it were, so that the density of fact becomes only a medium to reveal the latent metaphysical meaning. For the most part

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Mr. Blackmur avoids this danger with admirable dexterity; only in the essay on Babbitt does one feel that the terms of the dialectic never quite mesh with the intellectual issues of Humanist doctrine.

Mr. Blackmur's dialectic, however, is not used only as a scaffolding for his studies of individual figures. It also receives a more concrete aesthetic application in his outline for a theory of literature, as well as in an important essay on the later novels of Henry James where Mr. Blackmur revises some of his earlier ideas about form in fiction. The symbolic imagination, we have been told, is at work in literature and the arts; and Mr. Blackmur, naturally enough, sees the arts as a theoretic form (he takes the term from Croce) creating "the sort of order which is responsive to every movement of behavior and every pulse of inspiration: an order which gives room to fresh disorder whenever it occurs." Mr. Blackmur's theory of literature turns out to be a series of brilliant verbal variations on this idea, rising to a vision of life itself viewed as an eternal contest between "the two realities of aspiration and behavior." As Mr. Blackmur himself remarks, this essay is "a kind of critical poem" rather than a discursive effort; and one fears that it will suffer the frequent fate of such hybrids by not being entirely satisfactory either to lovers of poetry or of the intellect.

Far more fruitful is Mr. Blackmur's use of his dialectic in the James essay. Having defined the dialectic as "the form of life itself," or the underlying classic form of life, Mr. Blackmur goes on to argue that individual novels each depict "a particular struggle between manners and behavior, between the ideal insight and the actual momentum in which the form of life is found." And just as Mr. Blackmur has rejected the pretension of any one perspective on reality to be absolute, so now he rejects the same claim for any one method of objectifying this underlying classic form and giving it artistic shape. No one technique or executive form is an absolute standard for the novel; and the interest of this assertion is heightened by other essays in the present book in which we can trace the course of Mr. Blackmur's thought on this key question. For Mr. Blackmur's masterly study of James's Prefaces, written in 1934, did more than any single work except Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* to canonize the Jamesian conception of dramatic form in the novel—a conception derived, as James himself was never tired of explaining, from the drama and the plastic arts. This criterion of dramatic form is the one that the New Criticism advocated when it paid attention to the novel at all; and Mr. Blackmur has been one of its most zealous defenders.

But already in 1938, in a study of the craft of Melville, the canker of doubt had begun to fester. Mr. Blackmur here puzzles over the prob-

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lem of why *Moby-Dick* indubitably manages to hold the interest of its readers, and why some of these readers even think it has a story, when it is "a book of which Henry James would have said that it told no story to speak of." Instead of being led by this to question James's narrowly restricted notion of a story, and perhaps realizing that *Moby-Dick* was based on the far more fundamental narrative element of epic action, Mr. Blackmur can only conclude that those readers who think Melville had a story were deceived. In his latest essay, though, Mr. Blackmur has reached the point of repudiating the Master himself; for in the teeth of James's declaration that *War and Peace* lacks "deep-breathing economy of organic form," Mr. Blackmur answers that Tolstoy's book has every quality of organic form James admires although "in a different relation to executive form than any he [James] could accept." It is good to get this *a priori* notion of dramatic form finally out of the way, useful though it has been in the hands of so acute a critic as Mr. Blackmur in sharpening our eye for the aesthetics of fiction.

Mr. Blackmur's essay on the later novels of James is an intense and wide-ranging effort to seize the moral terms in which James dramatized "the permanent struggle between the human condition and human aspirations." So far as Mr. Blackmur confines himself to the characters and themes in these books, his insights are unsurpassed for penetration and suggestiveness; one feels that at last these novels have found a critic who measures up to their intricate delicacy and moral refinement. But Mr. Blackmur throws out so wide a net as he goes along that one cannot help being surprised at some of the catch that is hauled in. Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* becomes James's version of Dante's Beatrice; we are told that she learns in a London drawing-room two of the lessons that Dostoevsky found in the enormous abyss of *The Brothers Karamazov*; and before the essay is over we have heard about the rise of art for art's sake, the great growth of population in modern times, the disestablishment of culture and the resulting shift in the bases of society, as well as a number of other interesting matters which, in spite of Mr. Blackmur's assurances, have only the loosest connection with anything we can find in a late James novel.

From a criticism that moved in the direction of making finer and finer discriminations within the work of art, Mr. Blackmur now appears to be going in the direction of an analogical affability that dissolves all formal, historical and cultural boundaries in the warmth of its embrace. Nor is it hard to understand the natural evolution by which this change has been gradually accomplished. Mr. Blackmur sees all cultural movement proceeding under the form of his dialectic; and, ever since Plato,

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it has been an inherent movement of the mind to let essential similarities take precedence over accidental differences. Still, the danger for criticism here is very close to the one that Mr. Blackmur points out with reference to Kenneth Burke—except that where Burke substitutes his rhetoric for literature, Mr. Blackmur, if he is not careful, may find himself substituting his dialectic or his general form of life for the concrete literary form of life he is nominally talking about.

Mr. Blackmur's overinvolvement with his dialectic betrays itself most obviously, it seems to me, in the disconcerting vagueness and imprecision of his vocabulary whenever he gets down to primary definitions. It is difficult even for the best-intentioned reader not to feel some exasperation when Mr. Blackmur defines his most important term as follows: "The symbolic imagination perhaps can be put as the means of bringing to significance, to order, the knowledge we have above and below the level of the mind. It is, in short, the chief mode of participation in the life common to all men at all times." This is more a shot in the dark than a definition; but to attribute its deficiencies either to carelessness or incapacity would be a serious mistake: no one is more careful than Mr. Blackmur when he wishes to be, and no one more expert. By using such blanket terms, Mr. Blackmur is trying to avoid getting caught in his own dialectic—he is struggling to escape the ultimate treachery of language, which commits you to one position and one perspective when you are so agonizingly aware at the same time of all the others. To circumvent such treachery Mr. Blackmur defines his terms as sweepingly as possible, or he uses some emotive or imaginative image to give the "feel" of what he means rather than any meaning that would hem him in too tightly.

But this, in the end, amounts to an attempt to evade the conditions of all rational discourse. Was it not Mr. Blackmur himself, after all, who remarked appositely that "to think straight you must overshoot your mark"? Mr. Blackmur tries desperately not to overshoot, and he pays the penalty for this *hubris*—he sometimes lands so lamentably short that he fails to communicate any apprehensible meaning whatever. At such moments one cannot help wishing that Mr. Blackmur would risk overshooting, and, as in the past, focus his superb critical sensibilities (and his concepts) sharply on the object. For in the past, present or future, so long as Mr. Blackmur aims his shots at the particular work of art, we can be sure that he will continue to produce criticism of a subtlety and profundity unrivaled in modern Anglo-American literature.

Joseph Frank

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THE REFORMER AS REACTIONARY

THE AGE OF REFORM. By Richard Hofstadter. Alfred A. Knopf. $4.50.
STRANGERS IN THE LAND. By John Higham. Rutgers University Press. $6.00.

The use of such words as liberal and conservative, progressive and reactionary not only as labels for political movements but also as emotionally weighted slogans is a source of constant semantic confusion, and during periods (like the present) when allegiances are no longer crystallized around any clear-cut practical issues, it becomes almost impossible to talk meaningfully about politics at all. One is tempted to suggest that every twenty or thirty years a moratorium should be declared on all the familiar words and a completely new vocabulary adopted. This might have made it more difficult for the leftists of two decades ago to sell totalitarianism as an up-to-date brand of liberalism and for the rightists of today to repackage nineteenth-century laissez-faire liberalism under the label of a new conservatism. This kind of confusion has always been particularly prevalent in the United States as a result of certain peculiarities in the American political tradition. In America, unlike Europe with its feudalistic background, liberalism has always retained a strong tendency to find its utopia in the past, in the Jeffersonian myth of an agrarian and individualistic democracy. The main dynamic force in American society, on the other hand, has always been the capitalistic industrialism whose first great spokesman was Alexander Hamilton. Jeffersonianism, liberal in its political ideals, was economically conservative; Hamiltonianism, politically reactionary, was economically progressive. The conventional political terminology, minted in Europe, does not cover such phenomena.

Mr. Hofstadter's analysis of the ideology of Populism and Progressivism presents a very necessary semantic clarification. While he is very much aware of the dangers of oversimplification, his main emphasis is on the reactionary elements in American reform movements, both Populism and Progressivism being strongly influenced by an unrealistic nostalgia for the Jeffersonian utopia. Populist thinking, as Mr. Hofstadter shows in detail, was permeated with the myth of the self-sufficient agrarian individualist, while Progressivism appealed mainly to various middle-class groups who had lost their traditional high status in American society as a result of the rise of big business. Both movements relied heavily on moralistic slogans derived from the ethos of an earlier epoch. Mr. Hofstadter draws a contrast between the ineffectiveness of the reformers as long as they sought primarily to reassert

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the individualistic myth of the past and their concrete successes whenever they adapted their goals to the new economy, and interprets the New Deal not as a continuation of Progressivism but as a more realistic movement guided by concern for practical results; during the Roosevelt period it was not the reformers but their opponents who appealed to moralistic slogans. Mr. Hofstadter's central thesis is by no means new, but it is worked out with the aid of a vast quantity of detailed research, and it enables him to explore aspects of the Populist and Progressive movements which naive liberals have always found baffling and embarrassing and have often preferred to ignore. Brilliantly written, and displaying a refreshing intellectual sophistication, *The Age of Reform* is undoubtedly the best analysis of the subject yet written.

As a protest against the special privileges of big business, Populism has usually received the approval of liberal historians (and for the past generation almost all American historiography has been liberal). Actually it was deeply infected with nativism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and with rural suspicion of the city and of foreign countries, and its leading spokesmen showed a strong tendency to interpret all recent history as a conspiracy of the money power (usually English or Jewish, or both) to enslave honest citizens. Such sinister attitudes are characteristic of classes who feel insecure and have lost status, and as Mr. Hofstadter shows, they were also displayed at the same time by another group who had only contempt for the Populists: namely, by members of old New England families like the Adamses and the Lodges. Underlying the whole reform movement was a strong element of resistance to the whole historic trend which was both destroying the old economic individualism and at the same time ending American isolation, and this resistance could assume either liberal or reactionary forms according to how it was channeled by the quality of its leadership and the course of events. In terms of Mr. Hofstadter's approach, it is no longer puzzling that Southern Populism so easily degenerated into a crusade for white supremacy, that the age of reform was also an age of a militantly nationalistic foreign policy, that so many farm-belt Progressives were America-Firsters, and that the state that produced the La Follette dynasty is now represented by Senator McCarthy.

The same alignment of forces appears in Mr. Higham's book, which traces xenophobic thinking and activity from the Civil War until the adoption of immigration restrictions in the 1920's. Whereas big businessmen usually favored unlimited immigration, fear of the foreigner was propagated partly by members of old Eastern families (the New Yorker Madison Grant being a characteristic representative of the species) and

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partly by rural and small-town groups of the same type as the Populists. *Strangers in the Land* can be strongly recommended as a comprehensive and reliable survey of an important subject. On the other hand Mr. Higham, whose own attitude is vigorously liberal and who is therefore hostile to all brands of nativism, makes little attempt to interpret the material he has assembled, and much of it can be understood only in the light of Mr. Hofstadter's book. Mr. Higham, for example, appears to be somewhat surprised by the fact that "anti-foreign feelings steadily gathered strength at a time when the dominant force of Progressivism was also surging upward in potency and enthusiasm."

Mr. Higham ends his book at 1925 and does not mention McCarran; Mr. Hofstadter concludes with a brief discussion of the attitude of the New Deal and does not mention McCarthy. Yet both books have significant implications for the contemporary political scene. *The Age of Reform* is, in fact, a most tantalizing performance, since Mr. Hofstadter seems to be constantly on the verge of making some illuminating remarks about current issues but to be always on guard against generalizations that cannot be adequately buttressed with footnotes. He points out, however, that nostalgia for the agrarian myth is still a significant

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force in American life; "much of America still longs for—indeed, expects again to see—a return of the older individualism and the older isolation, and grows frantic when it finds that even our conservative leaders are unable to restore such conditions." Perhaps his most important implication is that since the New Deal this nostalgia, no longer linked with Progressivism, has mostly assumed overtly reactionary forms. This should make possible a healthy clarification of the political scene, but so far the most conspicuous result has been that American liberalism, having abandoned the Jeffersonian myth that gave it so much of its dynamic appeal, no longer advocates any positive program with much sense of conviction. Present-day liberals, as Mr. Hofstadter says, "find themselves far more conscious of those things they would like to preserve than they are of those things they would like to change."

Henry Bamford Parkes

A CRITIC'S POINT OF VIEW

THE INMOST LEAF. By Alfred Kazin. Harcourt, Brace. $4.75.

Metacriticism—the critical review of critical reviews—is an arid discipline. Its resources are soon depleted, whether it be in mutual admiration or envious recrimination within the small circle of a critical elite. In either case, metacriticism, criticism upon criticism, usually is a barrier, rather than a gate, to the enjoyment and communication of literature. The best one can do, therefore, with critical essays and reviews like those collected in the present volume is to convey some impression of the "point of view" (to use a favorite expression of Mr. Kazin's) from which the critic approaches his work and to suggest what kind of criticism results from this individual point of view.

The present volume provides a good basis for plotting Mr. Kazin's position on the map of contemporary criticism. It contains 28 contributions, of which all but two are relatively brief essays (from 5 to 10 pages), which were written, during the last 15 years, for various magazines, both middlebrow and highbrow. The two exceptions are, first, excerpts from an Italian journal (dated 1947) and, secondly, a long critical essay of 50 pages on William Blake, reprinted from Mr. Kazin's introduction to *The Portable Blake*.

This is a substantial body of work. And one's first impression is

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that Mr. Kazin, after the prodigal success of *On Native Grounds,* has firmly and solidly established himself as an articulate, individual, and intelligent voice in American criticism. (It is interesting to note, however, that the present collection does not contain a single essay on the American literary scene after World War II.) Mr. Kazin's own profile as a critic emerges most clearly in the friendly portraits he has drawn of fellow critics, like Edmund Wilson and Paul Rosenfeld, with whom he feels a sense of community. In the essay on Wilson, he reminds us that "it is frightening to see how far we have come—under cover of the literary charades and academic triviality which our criticism has become—from the democratic affections that once held our writers together" and concludes on the affirmation that "a literary critic is first of all a man and a citizen, a man who would be as ashamed to take the side of power as to write a bad sentence." In the essay on Paul Rosenfeld, his own critical credo is stated still more forthrightly: "The revolt against 'softness' and 'romanticism' in literature has carried with it a fear of the humanistic moral passion that is still the great heritage of our romantic and democratic past. And to this, in an age of increasing depersonalization and the outward hardness that conceals per-

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sonal anxiety, has been joined the peculiarly contemporary fear of 'mere' personal expressiveness. In our day, the real princelings of criticism have been those who can manage, in some way or other, to sound like impersonal experts, and for whom the work before them is always an occasion for technical analysis or some sovereign redefinition of our lot."

These remarks are an expression of "the inmost leaf," the "innermost point of view," which Mr. Kazin himself brings to the study and interpretation of literature. His "personal attitude" is suffused with the subdued colors of a "humanistic, moral passion" and a quiet yearning for the romantic democratic heritage of our culture. This means he is not an academician; i.e., his criticism is not the type of scholarship in which insights are buried under a debris of learnedness. He is not a formalist, the oracular expert *par excellence,* whose pretense of scientific objectivity and personal detachment is so frequently but an excuse for reactionary prejudices or a threadbare cloak for religious obscurantism. He is not a grass-roots populist or jingoist, nor is he obsessed with psychological analysis in depth as the simple and sole key to the merit and meaning of a work of art. Finally, he is not so enamored by the critical enterprise, as some prominent liberal critics seem to be, that he forgets that the primary function of criticism is to serve, rather than supersede, the work of art.

Thus, in the division between the hard-headed and tender-hearted, Mr. Kazin belongs to the latter. His criticism—as his style of writing—is soft and mellow, humane and humanistic. It is "liberal" both in the liberality of judgment and in the liberal concern for the free expression of the imagination caught in art. It is faithful to the "creative function of naturalism," to the memory of Spinoza, Darwin, Marx, Freud and Dewey rather than to latter-day philosophical apostles and religious high priests; but this naturalism is "moral," too, in its respect for the integrity and intrinsic worth of the artists' vision, in its sensitivity to the complexity and ambiguity of human experience translated into the symbols of art. Mr. Kazin's favorite expressions, and critical criteria, refer to "experience" and "imagination" as the core of the artistic process, to "moral passion" as against the "duplicity of the intellect," to "understanding" as something more than "ideas" and causal analysis, to the "individual vision" of each writer as something which transcends personal background, social significance, and the clash of ideologies.

This "point of view" is very *sympathique,* perhaps precisely because it is an approach to literature which is rather old-fashioned,

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reminiscent of the subdued, humane, and liberal passions of the eighteenth century. After reading Mr. Kazin's excellent introduction to Blake, one feels like re-reading Blake, not other critical opinions about Blake. And it comes as a surprise to find a critic who invariably subordinates his own work to the work before him, who is willing to be informative without being dogmatic, and who is anxious to arouse a personal response on behalf of literature without extracting from it a way of salvation. It comes as a surprise to find a critic who still speaks in personal terms of "I feel," and "I hear," and "I see," treating the reader as an equal, as it were, inviting participation, agreement, and dissent instead of posing, ponderously and pretentiously, as the master of those who know. In short, it is pleasant to read a critic who is so modest and human.

All this, as I was saying, is very *sympathique,* so much so, in fact, that I began to wonder why I was *only* pleased, and did not feel more. Reading 28 pieces in succession is, of course, swallowing a big dose of criticism. There are weak links in this long chain; but it isn't, I think, a matter of being dissatisfied (say) with Mr. Kazin's treatment of Proust's letters, the poetry of Cummings, or the world of Kafka, which is responsible for a lack of whole-hearted enthusiasm. It is some overall quality of this type of criticism, characteristic even of the pieces which deserve nothing but praise. A good critic is an angry man; or must, at least, be capable of anger. Mr. Kazin, I think, is not angry enough. Since he understands so well and widely, he forgives too easily. A point of view which is so urbane, so intelligently responsive to the subtleties and complexities of the human heart—this very quality which is personally so attractive also sets limits to criticism. The multiple strands so sensitively and gently woven into the critical fabric blend

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so smoothly that they tend to cancel each other. When one's view is so all-encompassing, the distinctive point of view gets lost, or the criticism becomes so "literary" that it dare not speak its mind beyond the confines of literature.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Kazin is frequently attracted by the themes of anger, revolt, and madness in literature, by Blake's "wrath" against the moral order, by the "painfulness" of D. H. Lawrence, by Fitzgerald's "crack-up," by the "anger" of Flaubert and the "fury" of Faulkner. But when he turns to these manifestations of literary passion and protest, he tends to interpret them primarily as an integral part of the writer's own world. Thus Flaubert's furious outburst, "I can no longer talk with anyone without growing angry, and whenever I read anything by one of my contemporaries I rage" is seen as the anger of a writer who, though "he had discovered he could do 'anything' with language, nevertheless felt that he was not fully getting his say." In short, it was Flaubert's problem, not the critic's, nor ours. Reading Mr. Kazin one often feels as if the great literary rebels were *only* fighting an inner struggle over the success or failure of their artistic visions and aspirations, as if there were no enemies abroad. That renders the great literary rages relatively harmless; it sets up an artificial division between the writer's intensely subjective imagination and personal anguish, on the one hand, and the objective significance of his work, on the other. Mr. Kazin's own profile as a critic would stand out more sharply, and his achievement would be more lasting and influential, I believe, if he could join more passionately and angrily into the artist's fight against the public enemy—at the risk, to be sure, that anger and passion might reduce the marketability of the critic's product.

But if these be defects, they are the defects of Mr. Kazin's virtues. It would be ungrateful, therefore, if one did not record in conclusion that they do not seriously impair the contribution of a critic whose articulate intelligence, natural humanity, and unpretentious, sensitive response to life and literature express a "point of view" which is more congenial to my own than most contemporary criticism I read.

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CAMBRIDGE THEATRICALS

In the performance of *The Mother of Us All* by the Adams House Music Society and the Bach Society Orchestra under the vigorous direction of Victor Yellin, a teaching fellow at Harvard, Cambridge has lately enjoyed a theatrical evening of the greatest charm and distinction. The Sanders Theatre setting, of course, had much to do with it. Scene 2 is set "in a Victorian amphitheatre in Cambridge." Virgil Thomson has said that "if I had to design the set, Sanders Theatre would be it." Everything about this homely, high-minded old ruin contributes cheerfully to the total effect. It was here in 1898 that Gertrude Stein heard her unlikely heroine, Susan B. Anthony, speak. But this, amazingly enough, was the opera's first performance in New England and only its fourth production anywhere since its *première* in 1947. It was obvious from the intense delight it aroused in the audience in this extremely engaging but far from perfect performance that its future is as secure as that of opera itself. We obviously had here, if anyone was still in doubt, one of the great operatic collaborations. My report is no more than an amateur's reflections on a single hearing, but the critical understanding of these Stein-Thomson operas is still largely before us, so perhaps amateurism is not entirely out of place.

The Mother of Us All is essentially a hero-pageant like *The Damnation of Faust* or the Claudel-Honegger *Jean d'Arc au Bûcher,* an extremely dangerous form to attempt but also extremely rewarding when the collaborators are of the rank of Berlioz and de Nerval or Stein and Thomson. It stands to *Four Saints in Three Acts* roughly as *Parsifal* stands to *Lohengrin, Aïda* to *La Traviata,* Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me* to *Juno and the Paycock,* or Faulkner's *Fable* to *Light in August.* This is strictly a distinction in kind rather than in quality, for *The Mother* has miraculously escaped the heaviness of the kind of abstract pageantizing which most artists attempt at some point in their careers. The reason for this, I think, lies in the joint virtues of two skeptical and experienced people very much at one about the fundamentals of theater. Their negative, self-critical powers work as harmoniously together as their positive qualities. Both show a great tact of exclusion in this opera, an admirable instinctive modesty about what not to attempt. If Thomson gives in more here than elsewhere to his expansive good nature and is more openly corny, the same is true of Stein. But this neo-Whitmanian as-

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pect of the affair is wonderfully balanced by a sublime absurdity and perfectly genuine emotions.

If the opera purports to be "about" Susan B. Anthony, the history is strictly preposterous. We are meant only to savor the essence of the matter, and even Miss Stein's essences are a trifle peculiar, the intuitions of a gifted child setting out to write history merely from the sound of names. When Indiana Elliot changes her name to Indiana Loiterer, forcing Jo Loiterer to become Jo Elliot, she has conclusively emancipated herself. It is quite sufficient for the dignity of Gertrude S. and Virgil T. (two minor characters in the opera) that they have names. No need for the sententious omniscience of a Thornton Wilder narrator. This is no question of a search for identity; it is a dramatic display of historical fact. Susan B. never has the slightest doubt about *her* name. It is intoned throughout the opera as hypnotically as the latest name of God. What worries her is not how real her name may be but whether it may not be too real. In her moving final meditation, she sings: "Do they know? Do they know because I told them so? Or do they know?" (My memory is approximate; I haven't the text.) One especially good moment has Jo Loiterer moving sadly offstage singing: "Is anyone going to remember Isabel Wentworth? Is anyone going to remember Isabel Wentworth?" The effect is oddly Chekhovian, but the program merely tells us that Isabel Wentworth, along with Gloster Heming, was an "intellectual of 1890-1900." Of Constance Fletcher, of whose patrician charm "John Adams" obviously sings throughout the opera, we learn only that she was "a gracious lady of 1905-10, with eye trouble." Poor Constance, having submitted meekly to Adams's abstract gallantry for seven scenes, goes "blind as a bat" in the last and gives up in disgust.

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Mass.? Gertrude Stein's unflaggingly dramatic sense of emotion permits her to do almost anything she wants with her "theme." Susan B.'s emotional dilemmas are not much different from those of Antigone, and Stein has the good sense to let the music and the production do most of her atmospheric work for her. Her appeal to the audience may be childlike, but it is also canny; for the truth of the matter is that the audience doesn't want to be told any more about Susan B. Anthony than it knows already. It can go to the Encyclopedia for that. This note of lyric skepticism, or skeptical lyricism, is struck at the beginning and carried successfully through to the end.

Great freedom is therefore left to composer and producer. The Harvard production provided Angel More, Daniel Webster's "dead, former sweetheart," with a wonderfully silly little set of wings which always raised a sympathetic titter in her more poignant moments. John Adams looked more like Peacock's Scythrop than anyone seen on the streets of Quincy. All this seemed charming rather than coy, like the random ejaculations of people in Chekhov. Thomson, in his music, has followed the lead of Berlioz (and Tchaikovsky in *Eugene Onegin*) and written a lyric, interpretative score, dramatic only at second remove, a score very attentive to the words, rich and "Germanic" in its texture but also brassy, solemn, militant, sophisticated, lyric and witty by turn. It is also remarkably free of the sometimes too-self-conscious Americanism of Aaron Copland, unashamed to be a hybrid and making no effort to hide the fact behind a specious show of modernism.

What we finally have to thank, however, is Gertrude Stein's implacable feminism and her grasp of emotion in the theater. The opera has real progression, resulting from nothing more sensational than a forceful woman's gift for making other people recognize their true minds. Webster becomes "human" without surrendering any of his Websterishness. The minor characters are present mainly to be entertained; but they see something done that can't be undone, and are thereby changed. The pressure is always emotional and psychological, as it is in "Melanctha," but because of the many diversions, musical and otherwise, far less tautological than is usual with Stein. Contours are generous but not oppressive; there is always room for something else. This is how opera should be written, and it is not likely to be so well written again for a long time. I don't mean to compare it to *Four Saints*. It is probably not as good. But this is meant to be a tribute rather than a review. I had the feeling that one of the lost, late children of the '20s had arrived home for good.

R. W. Flint

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CORRESPONDENCE

IBSEN AND KIERKEGAARD

SIRS:

A writer who deals professionally with other subjects will naturally hesitate to step upon ground occupied by literary critics, especially if the critic's name is Mary McCarthy. Yet her reflections upon Ibsen in the Winter 1956 issue of PR prompt some cursory observations on the part of a London theater-goer who has recently attended a performance of *The Wild Duck*. It would seem that this play is performed very differently in London and in New York, for I find it difficult to reconcile the Gregers Werle of the current London production with Miss McCarthy's "ugly man in a countrified gray suit" who "has been a radical before the opening of the play." *Our* Gregers is a handsome and poetic young man who looks and talks rather like Soren Kierkegaard in his younger days—admittedly dangerous in his neurotic perfectionism, but also marked by a certain youthful innocence. He is, after all, very much the rebellious son throughout the play, and his immature behavior in the Ekdal household is entirely in character.

There seems no reason to doubt that Ibsen was familiar with Kierkegaard's writings, disapproved of their tenor, and was confronted with a public already *au courant* of what has latterly become an intellectual fashion in the West. (In Germany the process had already started before 1914; in Scandinavia it was impossible to be ignorant of Kierkegaard.) In England, where the fashion currently rages in a particularly aggravating form, even the layman such as myself cannot help being aware that the kind of moral fanaticism which Ibsen subjected to criticism in *The Wild Duck* is regarded as an enviable quality by numbers of earnest young people who support the current religious revival at the universities. It may be due to this atmosphere that the Gregers of the present production is so unmistakably Kierkegaardian in appearance and tone as to have come as a shock to some spectators with Christian-existentialist leanings. At least one of them, a lady who practices philosophy as a profession, was induced, albeit somewhat reluctantly, to accept the above interpretation of Ibsen's intention in the play as correct; although I am bound to admit that she demurred to the further suggestion that Kierkegaard was a dubious advertisement for the faith, being in every way a lesser man than the poor benighted clerics whom he denounced in print for compromising with reality. But however that may be, can one doubt that Ibsen's intention was to pillory the kind of attitude which one encounters in Kierkegaard's writings? Incidentally, I should have thought Relling was about the only sane person in the play, and quite clearly a representative of Ibsen's own mature outlook.

Having ventured thus far on ground normally beyond my chosen province, I will merely add that Mr. Irving Howe's remarks on the subject of Orwell (with whom I was very briefly acquainted) seem to me to be not only very a propos, but also to suggest an answer to some of the questions indirectly raised by Miss McCarthy: Orwell's radical common sense, or commonsensible radicalism, is momentarily unfashionable for precisely the reasons that induce young people to attend revivalist meetings and seek inspiration in various forms of moral fanaticism and anti-humanism.

London G. L. Arnold

SIRS:

Yes, Ibsen was familiar with Kierkegaard, and is supposed to have repre-

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sented him (as the hero) in *Brand*, many years before *The Wild Duck*.

There is no justification in the text for playing Gregers Werle as a handsome young man. He has been up in the mines, at the Hoidal works, for fifteen years, visiting the cottagers with his "claim of the ideal." I take this to mean that he has been preaching some sort of radical social gospel. His father speaks of his "drudging away at the works, year in and year out, like the merest clerk, and refusing to accept a shilling more than ordinary wages." The "countrified gray suit" is in a stage direction. Gregers is filled with self-hatred, which encompasses even his own name: " 'Gregers,' and 'Werle' to follow—did you ever hear anything so hideous?" And: "GREGERS (*shuddering*). I should feel inclined to spit on any fellow with a name like that." He would rather be a dog, he exclaims, than be Gregers Werle. He hero-worships the handsome, "poetic" Hjalmar. "Good-looking he was, too, the nincompoop—pink and white, just what common girls like for a lover and with his susceptible disposition and that sympathetic voice of his," says Dr. Relling, to Gregers, of *Hjalmar*.

The ugliness that emanates from Gregers is felt not only by himself but by the other characters. "Well, and so you can still stand it up there at those disgustingly dirty works?" says Dr. Relling. And: ". . . isn't it more likely that you yourself have brought the foulness with you from the mines up there?" When he moves into the Ekdal household as a lodger, he makes what Gina twice calls "a filthy mess" of his room. Ibsen's room too was called a filthy mess by his wife, while Kierkegaard was very fastidious.

The only thing I see to connect Gregers with Kierkegaard is "the sin of the father," to which Kierkegaard also alludes, darkly. But this is a regular Ibsen motif, figuring in *Ghosts*, of course, but also in *Rosmersholm*, *A Doll's House*, and *Pillars of Society*. And Gregers does not sound at all like Kierkegaard's writing, while he sounds precisely like Ibsen's own preaching, whether it comes from the mouth of Nora or Lona Hessel (in *Pillars of Society*) or Rosmer. The idea of "a true marriage" that shall not be based on a lie—Gregers' besetting idea—is one-hundred-per-cent pure Ibsenism. It appears as the doctrine of *Pillars of Society, Ghosts, A Doll's House, The Lady from the Sea, Rosmersholm*. Lona Hessel, for instance, comes to "purify" Bernick's marriage of the lie on which it rests, exactly as Gregers comes to purify the Ekdal marriage. The only difference is that Lona is presented as an admirable "courageous" person. Kierkegaard never had any such notions. He was not a social reformer. The whole realm of the social appeared to him unreal and absurd. Nor was he a moral fanatic but a witty utterer of paradoxes.

Gregers is a crazy fanatic (his mother had "fits"), but his province is wholly secular. He never makes any allusion to God or religion and he speaks of "wrongs," not of sins—the financial wrong his father did old Lieutenant Ekdal as well as the social wrong he did Hjalmar by fathering his illegitimate child on him. He has the outlook of a crusading, muckraking liberal bent on exposing "the interests."

As for Dr. Relling, he may be the only sane person in the play but he is also a sly old drunkard who has made a mess of his life. He is certainly no representative of humanism. He is simply the opposite pole of Gregers. The one believes zealously in reform; the other thinks man is incorrigible, a mass of vicious traits held together by a "saving" lie. I do not consider either of these polarized opposites to be especially sane, but they may be the poles between which Ibsen's mind oscillated.

New York, N. Y. Mary McCarthy

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